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THE MOTOR CAR IN NEW SOUTH WALES
1900 - 1937

by

Lester Gerald Hovenden

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with Honours

Department of History
University of Sydney
March, 1981

c L.G. Hovenden, 1981
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the Royal Automobile Club of Australia for permission to consult the records held by the Club and The Archives Authority of New South Wales for permission to quote extracts from, and refer to, the New South Wales Colonial (later Chief) Secretary's Department's documents cited in this thesis. Photographs and cartoons from the Australian motorist have been reproduced with the consent of the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries and those from the Motor in Australia with the consent of William Brooks and Co. Pty. Ltd.

The maps were drawn by Edgar Ford. Pat Attwater typed the thesis.

It would not have been possible to write this thesis without access to the collections, and the assistance of the staff, of The Archives Authority of New South Wales; The Australian National University Archives; The Commonwealth Archives Office, Canberra; Fisher Library, University of Sydney; The Institute of Advanced Studies Library, Australian National University; The Mitchell Library and The State Library of New South Wales.

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Heather Radi, for her advice and encouragement. Professor Michael Roe suggested motor transport as a topic for study.
The errors, omissions and deficiencies of method and style are entirely my own work.

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'... I admire what you have done, and while I must have qualms about a motor car in the hands of every mongoloid who happens to have a few hundred dollars to spend, I recognize that the future is yours. You're still a young man - fifty years or thereabouts? - and perhaps you understand as I cannot the need to separately mobilize the masses of men.'

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INTRODUCTION

In the United States of America, which became the world's first motorised society and which remains the quintessential example of the 'car culture', the history of the motor car has been extensively studied. There the term 'automobility' has been coined to sum up the combined impact of the motor vehicle, the automobile industry and the highway and the emotional implications of the motor impact for Americans.\(^1\)

This thesis does not aspire to study 'automobility'. It focuses on the utilization of the motor vehicle in New South Wales between 1900 and 1937, on the groups seeking to exploit it, on the problems arising and on the response of the government to these problems.

During the 1900s a number of wealthy and adventurous gentlemen enthusiastically adopted the automobile. The application of the internal combustion engine to road transport, small boats and, later, air travel constituted a revolution in transport technology. Consequently motor enthusiasts identified the expansion of motor transport with progress. On an individual level the motorist quickly recognised the potential of his vehicle as a means of sport, recreation and personal mobility. Early motorists, such as Samuel Hordern, realised that motor vehicles could be profitably employed.

in their businesses. Others saw the profits to be made by transporting passengers and freight by motor vehicle.

Except for the Depression years the number of motor vehicles in New South Wales increased steadily between 1900 and 1937. Cars became cheaper over the years resulting in a widening of the motor owning class. Pioneer motorists often employed chauffeurs to drive and maintain their vehicles. By 1937 the typical motorist was an owner driver who saw his vehicle as an everyday means of transport. In 1903 the Automobile Club of Australia (A.C.A.) was formed and operated mainly as a gentleman's social and sporting club. In 1924 the National Roads and Motorists Association (N.R.M.A.) was established and became a strong pressure group representing the interests of the motoring public. By the 1920s the number of commercial motor vehicles had increased to the point where they represented a considerable threat to the state owned tram and train services.

Long before the arrival of the motor vehicle New South Wales Governments had been concerned with traffic and transport matters. Private citizens did not need licences to ride horses or drive animal drawn vehicles. However it was illegal to ride or drive furiously or recklessly. Commercial vehicles and their drivers were subject to local control under the Municipalities Act of 1858. In 1873 a Transit Commission was established to control commercial vehicles operating in the Sydney Police District. Road construction and maintenance was state financed. Both the
railways and urban tram services were publicly owned. The intrusion of motor vehicles into these spheres of government activity posed many new problems.

During the 1900s pressure mounted for the establishment of an effective system of traffic control. Horse owners alleged that motor vehicles frightened their animals. Pedestrians pointed to the increased hazards facing those attempting to cross roads. The noise, smoke and smell produced by motor vehicles was also criticised. Householders complained about the dust which was raised by motor vehicles and which settled on gardens and washing. Local government authorities, whose roads were broken up to create the dust, shared the abhorrence of the dust problems. Above all motorists were accused of recklessness, if not criminal intent, and of being afflicted by a speed mania.

Apparently the prohibition of motor traffic was never considered in official circles. Indeed leading public men, notably Sir Joseph Carruthers, were keen motorists. Nevertheless the government recognised the need for specific regulations covering motor traffic. Local regulation created confusion and frustration as motor traffic moved without regard for local government boundaries.

The Motor Traffic Act of 1909 established a uniform traffic code for New South Wales. The Metropolitan Traffic Act of 1900 had transferred the functions and the staff of the Transit Commission to the Police Department. The Motor Traffic Act extended the traffic responsibilities of the Police
to cover all motor traffic in the state. The Police were also responsible for the formulation of traffic policy. The Act made provision for the registration of motor vehicles and the licencing of drivers.

Traffic control remained a problem after 1909 but between 1912 and 1924 the road question predominated. During the second half of the nineteenth century road making was neglected and railway construction given priority. The Local Government Act of 1906 made local councils responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads within their boundaries. The Act was hailed as a great affirmation of the principle of local responsibility in the governing of New South Wales. However it left local councils, who lacked adequate financial resources, equipment and trained staff, to face the demand for roads suitable for motor transport.

Motor traffic required different, more expensive roads. Steep inclines, which demanded great physical effort in ascent and presented the danger in descent of an inadequately braked load careering forward to crush the team, were the bane of draft animals. Broken surfaces troubled the slow moving teams less and tended to provide useful footholds for straining teams. Motor vehicles could cope with steep gradients but required smooth, sealed surfaces to operate efficiently. Motorists also demanded culverts and bridges. Automobiles stalled at river fords which were calmly negotiated by animals. Many pioneer motorists suffered the indignity of watching their vehicles being towed from rivers by horse or bullock teams.
The state government soon accepted the need for a specialised, central authority to assume responsibility for road construction and maintenance. In 1912 a Local Government (Main Roads) Bill was introduced providing for a Main Roads Board which would proclaim main roads, allocate finance and establish construction and maintenance standards. The Bill was condemned by the Shires and was defeated on its second reading in the Legislative Assembly. Shire Councils, reluctant to lose the power and patronage associated with road building and dissatisfied with the state government's cost sharing proposals, provided continuing opposition to main roads legislation.

During 1912 a 'good roads' movement took shape. The movement was supported by local government, rural and commercial interests. Motorists were interested but relatively unimportant supporters of the movement. In 1920 the National Roads Association (N.R.A.), which adopted the title National Roads and Motorists Association in 1924, was formed in Sydney. After some initial difficulties the Association was successful in its agitation for a Main Roads Act which was passed in 1924. The state government was also obliged to establish a Main Roads Board to meet the conditions imposed by the federal government on the road grants it made to the states from 1918 onwards.

The financial provisions of the Main Roads Act were acceptable to the Shires. However the establishment of the Main Roads Board entailed the transfer of local control over roads to a centralised agency.
Better roads ensured the expansion of motor transport which, by the 1920s, represented a threat to the state owned tram and train services. Few groups, apart from commercial motor operators, could countenance the destruction of the public transport system. Country interests relied on the railways, and their subsidised freight rates, for access to markets. Labor men were committed to the ideal of public transport. In addition many unionists among the party faithful were employed in the public transport services. Opponents of state owned enterprises realised that while closure of the public transport system would eliminate operating losses the huge debts accumulated in the construction of the railways would remain.

With the onset of the Great Depression the financial position of the public transport system became critical. Continuing losses threatened the viability of the public transport services and aggravated the state's financial plight. Successive governments accepted the need to protect the trams and trains from unrestricted motor competition. The exact form of regulation was bitterly debated but the principle was generally accepted.

The spiralling accident rate of the 1920s and the later 1930s again focused attention on traffic control. During the 1900s motorists generally belonged to the 'respectable' classes. It was accepted that most people would be licenced until they had demonstrated their incompetence or contempt for the traffic laws. This principle survived although licence
testing became stricter. Certainly adequate screening tests were not available. In addition the growing motor lobby was unlikely to accept severe restrictions on the right to drive. Instead harsh penalties were suggested for drunken and reckless drivers who were said to be responsible for the worsening accident problems. The Motor Traffic (Amendment) Act of 1937 established harsh penalties for serious traffic offences.

Traffic administration was upgraded in response to the rising accident toll. In 1915 the clerical and accounting functions of the Police Traffic Branch were taken over by civilian public servants releasing police for traffic duty. A Police motor cycle squad was established in 1916 and the motor squad was formed in 1930. In 1930 responsibility for registration, licencing and the formulation of traffic policy was transferred to the newly established Motor Transport Department. The Police remained responsible for the enforcement of the traffic laws.

By the 1930s the need to educate school children, and the community generally, in road safety had been accepted. In addition an acceptable system of compulsory third party insurance was being sought to regularise the position of the inevitable road accident victims.

The servicing and control of motor traffic proved expensive. The motor lobby argued that since motor transport had provided new and better services, created new employment
opportunities, and generally increased prosperity the community as a whole should meet the cost. However governments decided that motorists should pay for the services provided and also contribute to general revenue. Motor imports were subject to customs duties from the outset. Fees imposed under the Motor Traffic Act contributed to the cost of maintaining the licencing and registration systems. A state motor tax was imposed in 1914 to help to offset revenue losses resulting from the World War. The Main Roads Act diverted motor tax revenue to the road funds. However in 1926 the federal government imposed a petrol tax to cover its contribution to road building. By the 1930s, following changes to the federal aid roads scheme, the federal government was collecting considerably more in petrol tax than it was spending on roads. The balance was diverted to general revenue.

The majority of people in New South Wales were prepared to accept the advantages offered by motor transport. The perils of the motor age were well known by 1937 and attempts had been made to come to terms with these. A specialised motor age administration had been built up to handle the problems of traffic control, road building and commercial motor transport. The most striking feature of the new administrative arrangements was the extent to which power was transferred from local government to centralised authorities.
Most of the information for this thesis was found in published sources. The various serial publications fortunately preserved in the Mitchell Library and the State Library of New South Wales were the most prolific sources. Australian Motorist, Motor in Australia, Good roads and its successor The open road and the Australasian coach and motor body builder reported the development of motor transport with enthusiasm and, sometimes, exaggeration. The daily telegraph and The Sydney morning herald provided a wider and more critical view. The reports of government departments record the official view and contain much factual material. Official statistics were valuable sources but were lacking in some areas. The number of motor vehicles was not recorded until 1910 and changes in statistical categories renders other information unobtainable for some periods.

Some monographs proved useful. Several popular histories of motoring have been published. More specialised and scholarly works, notably Professor Don Aitkin's The Colonel: a political biography of Sir Michael Bruxner, F.A. Larcombe's three volume History of local government in New South Wales and the Main Roads Department sponsored history The roadmakers provided valuable information. The New South Wales Transport Acts 1930-1932 by W.E. Hotchkiss (B.A. Hons. thesis, Department of Government, University of Sydney) also contains much relevant information.

The most valuable collection of archival material is the New South Wales Chief Secretary's inwards correspondence
held by the Archives Authority of New South Wales. Both the Police and Motor Transport Departments advised that they hold no records relevant to this thesis. The Australian Archives in Canberra hold some records relating to the federal government's role in road building, the imposition of the petrol tax and the Australian motor industry. The Dunlop Rubber Company papers in the Australian National University Archives include information on motoring.

Of the private organisations interested in motoring the Royal Automobile Club of Australia generously allowed access to minute books and other records. Unfortunately the Club's records are far from complete. The N.R.M.A. advised that N.R.M.A. Council minutes and copies of N.R.M.A. correspondence are confidential unless 'used in some form, either in The Open Road or news releases'.
CHAPTER 1: PIONEERING

The years between 1900 and 1909 can be described as the era of pioneer motoring in New South Wales. The term pioneer needs qualification because motor vehicles had been in use in Europe since 1887, when the first Daimler was sold\(^1\), and the United States' first petrol powered car had been built by Charles and Frank Duryea in 1892\(^2\). It should also be noted that cyclists, whose needs and aspirations were closer to the motorist's than to those of animal teamsters, had begun touring New South Wales during the 1890s. Nevertheless the small group of wealthy and daring individuals who adopted motor vehicles tested and proved them under local conditions. Concurrently the commercial potential of the motor vehicle was recognised. In addition the foundations of the local motor trade were laid. Although motor vehicles remained relatively few in 1909 it had become apparent that they could not be contained within the existing system of traffic control. Calls for the restriction or prohibition of motor transport received little support in official circles. Instead the Government sought a system which would allow the exploitation of motor transport. The Motor Traffic Act of 1909, largely based on overseas legislation, was their solution.

It is not known when motor vehicles first appeared in New South Wales. Some writers have claimed that local inventors built automobiles during the 1890s. A vehicle, described as a steam engine on wheels, reputedly ran in 1893 and Charles Highland is said to have built a tri-car in 1894 using a Daimler motor. Another claim is that H. Knight Eaton of Brisbane rode a Woolf manganese motor cycle along George Street, Sydney in April 1895. Sydney's first foreign made automobile was a 4½ h.p. De Dion imported by a Sydney bicycle dealer, W.J.C. Elliott, in March 1900. Since fully imported vehicles dominated the Australian market until the First World War the motoring age in New South Wales could well be dated from the arrival of Elliott's De Dion.

The number of motor vehicles did not increase rapidly between 1900 and 1909. Official statistics were not compiled until 1910 when there were only 2,351 motor vehicles, 3,171 motor vehicle drivers, 2,030 motor cycles and 2,300 motor cycle riders in New South Wales.

The high cost of motor vehicles ensured that their numbers would increase slowly. In 1905, when tradesmen's weekly wages ranged from £2.5.0 to £3.0.0, even single cylinder cars cost between £215 and £325. Cheaper cars had

6. N.S.W. Police Department, Annual report 1910, p. 21.
limited appeal with the low priced American cars being somewhat despised. W.J.C. Elliott complained that:

There's no stability about a Yankee made machine .... They're cheap and nasty. They look very nice but something always goes wrong with the works after a few weeks use.

Apparently Elliott's views were widely shared because the American share of the New South Wales market fell from almost 33% in 1902 to less than 9% in 1907. Australians preferred solidly built British and European vehicles of 12 to 18 h.p., weighing between 30 and 40 cwt., and costing between £500 and $800.

Apart from the purchase price of motor vehicles the running costs were formidable. In 1906 it was claimed that running costs could be kept to 1d per mile but few motorists were so parsimonious. W.J.C. Elliott estimated weekly running costs at £5.7.3. Elliott assumed the motorist would travel 250 miles and allowed 10/- for emergencies and £2.0.0 for the wages of a driver. The number of chauffeurs employed is not recorded in official statistics but it appears that a significant number of motorists did indeed employ drivers. In 1908 C.W. Bennett, a motor trader, estimated that there were 1,000 cars in use in New South Wales and 600 chauffeurs.

Motoring in

We reproduce herewith some photographs taken in 1907, showing several makes of car which were popular in Sydney at that time. They make interesting comparisons.

Mr. W. Fisher, early secretary of the A.C.A., on his De Dion.

D. Gordon Craig's 8 h.p. Rover (Mr. A. Biden at wheel).

Sir Samuel Hordern's, Junr., 10-18 Darracq.

Mr. Fenton's 12-16 Darracq.

Mr. I. Phizackerly.

Mr. P. H. Morton's Vulcan (Mr. Geo. Cooke at wheel).

Cars used in Sydney in 1907.
in employment. If Bennett's impression was accurate, remembering that many wealthy motorists owned more than one car, a high proportion of cars were driven by chauffeurs.

Expense was not the only factor retarding the expansion of motor transport. The earliest cars usually had open bodies which left the occupants exposed to the elements forcing them to wear goggles and protective clothing. One British writer complained:

Alas! if women are going to motor, and motor seriously ... they must relinquish the hope of keeping their soft peach like bloom ... and must wear glasses - not small dainty glasses but veritable goggles ... for comfort and preservation of the eyesight ....

Some women ignored such warnings and in 1907 Miss Edith Walker was said to own two of the finest cars in New South Wales.

Enthusiasts such as Miss Walker also had to contend with the technical shortcomings of their vehicles. In the days before electric starters, cranking the engine demanded a deal of strength and agility. Furthermore mechanical breakdowns were frequent and springs and axles often broke on rough roads. Service facilities were scarce and motor tourists often had to send fuel on ahead by rail.


N.S.W. in 1907

and cars of today. We are indebted to Mr. Biden, of
Sydney, for the loan of these interesting photographs.

Dr. C. Lester's 16-18 Darracq.

The late Harry Rickards.

Mr. Mark Foy's 16-24 F.I.A.T.

Mr. Street's 16-20 Daimler.

Mr. Spiers' 16-20 Darracq.

Mr. G. O. Hyde's 28 L.P. Brasier.

Australian motorist
November 1919, p. 119

More of the class of 1907
Motorists had to contend with bad roads. During the second half of the nineteenth century road making was neglected in favour of railway construction. One hundred and three acres of wood block roads were laid in Sydney between 1880 and 1897 but this was an exception\textsuperscript{15}. Neglect was the rule and many roads went from being dusty and heavily rutted in summer to impassable quagmires in winter. Banjo Patterson, who rode as an observer in the first Dunlop Reliability Trial in 1905, likened parts of the Sydney-Melbourne road to 'old graveyards with the tombstones sticking up'\textsuperscript{16}. Bridge building had also been neglected leaving road users to ford water courses at any available crossing. In January 1908 a car was caught in a flash flood at the Uralla crossing on the Goulburn-Cooma road, submerged and rolled over by the force of the water\textsuperscript{17}. The driver escaped unhurt but had to wait for two days to retrieve his car.

Cyclists had preceded motorists on the roads and to some extent acted as trail blazers for motor tourists. One cyclist, Joseph Henry Pearson, began publishing tourist maps of New South Wales in 1896. Cyclists had demanded better roads but with little result. In 1900 Paddy's River Bridge was demolished by flood waters and calls for its replacement were ignored so that

\textsuperscript{15} Cannon, Michael, \textit{Life in the cities}, Melbourne, Nelson, 1907, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{16} Dunlop Rubber Company, \textit{Motoring and cycling notes}, 7 February, 1920, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 28 January, 1908, p. 8.
Dr. Arnott splashing through Paddy's River near Goulburn.

A competitor in the first Dunlop Trial of 1905 fords Paddy's River near Goulburn.
The cyclist riding unwarily from Goulburn would find himself suddenly precipitated some six feet into the bed of the river. This has actually happened. From the Sydney side the rider would crash into a barricade placed across this, the Queen's highway. 18

Although motoring was a difficult pastime it soon attracted keen adherents. There were those who saw the motor car as a source of recreation. Commenting on the growth of the motoring class the journal of the carriage trade reassured its readers that;

From enquiries we have made, we are inclined to believe that the persons using the motor cars are not of the (horse) driving class. They are drawn from the patrons of the bicycle, who have means to continue a form of taking pleasure with the motor car which increasing years and weight prohibits with the bicycle. 19

Clearly motorists were not only drawn from cycling circles but the leisure aspect of motoring is well noted. Motor touring ranged from short runs to local beauty spots to overland treks. For example in 1901 Mark Foy, James Macken and W.J.C. Elliott travelled to Melbourne in Foy's 10 h.p. Panhard to attend the VRC's spring race meeting 20. In 1902 Elliott and Macken, accompanied by Mrs. Macken, repeated the journey to attend the Caulfield Cup 21. These journeys not only gave pleasure to the participants but also demonstrated

21. Ibid., 24 October, 1902, p. 6.
the usefulness of the Automobile under Australian conditions.

Motor sport, which was a more organised and rigorous form of motor touring, offered an even sternier test of motor vehicles under local conditions. The Automobile Club of Australia organised contests such as hill climbs and reliability tours for its members. The highlights of motor sport between 1900 and 1909 were the Dunlop Reliability Trials of 1905. The first trial, in February 1905, saw seven of the twenty-three competitors who started from Sydney reach the finishing line in Melbourne. A run-off to Ballarat left Harley Tarrant victorious. The second trial started from Melbourne in November 1905 and nineteen competitors reached Sydney on equal terms. A run-off to Medlow Bath reduced the field to six but a further run-off back to Melbourne eliminated only one contender and a five-way tie was declared the final result. The Dunlop trials, with George Hobbs 'flying Mercedes' winning the plaudits of the press, focused public attention on the motor vehicle. In addition the excitement of motoring became widely understood. One reporter, apparently immersed in the spirit of the Trials wrote;

Foster's Talbot caused quite a sensation. It is said to be the most powerful car in Australia. During part of the run its speed must have been between 40 and 50 miles per hour and Foster and his passengers were observed to be hanging on like sailors in a gale. They came and went like a flash of light ....

While the Dunlop Trials convinced some of the value of the motor car they alerted others to the perils of motor

H. R. Arnott and W. T. Armitage at the start. Note the inevitable small boy.

At the start of the first Dunlop Trial of 1905.
traffic. In the New South Wales Legislative Assembly T.H. Thrower asked the Premier, J.H. Carruthers, '... whether the driving of motor cars at such speeds upon public highways is safe and in the public interest.'\textsuperscript{23} Carruthers, himself an enthusiastic motorist, replied that the speeding referred to was not in the public interest and that an appropriate bill would be introduced during the following week. It was not introduced.

Motor cyclists also participated in sporting events. Prior to 1908 competitions were organised by the New South Wales Cyclists Union. In 1908 the Annandale, Western Suburbs, Greater Northern and New South Wales Motor Cycle Clubs formed the Autocycle Union of New South Wales to control motor cycling\textsuperscript{24}. This body did not survive and in November 1909 its members were re-admitted to the Cyclists Union where they formed a motor cyclists section\textsuperscript{25}.

Practical considerations led some people to purchase motor vehicles. Medical practitioners were among the first and most welcome customers of the motor trade. Publicists informed doctors that motor vehicles could be started more easily than horses could be harnessed and were more economical in the long run. One writer claimed that while a buggy and

\textsuperscript{23} New South Wales Parliament Debates, 28 November, 1905, Volume 21, p. 4186.

\textsuperscript{24} Motor in Australia, 25 November, 1909, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
three horses were £60 cheaper than a £200 Thomson steam car the latter would last twice as long and cost only £57.10.0 in annual upkeep against £105.14.0 per annum for the buggy and horses. Doctors must have been impressed by the automobile's ability to travel further and faster than horses. In 1907 it was reported that a Dr. Lester of Mudgee was covering 250 miles each week in connection with his practice and had totalled 30,000 miles. Some doctors even ascribed therapeutic properties to the motor car with one writer asserting that riding in a motor car '... conduces to a healthy agitation .... it aids the perisaltic movement of the bowel and promotes the performance of their function.'

Even if such pronouncements were not taken seriously medical motorists helped to demonstrate the usefulness of motor vehicles. In addition doctors added respectability to motoring because they could hardly be branded as selfish idlers speeding about to the annoyance and danger of others.

Politicians also quickly appreciated the usefulness of motor vehicles. Motor cars were used to tour country areas and in 1906 J.H. Carruthers hired W.J.C. Elliott to drive him on a tour of the North Coast. Automobiles proved useful during elections especially for conveying electors to the polls. All available cars were booked some time

26. Australian cyclist tourist and traveller, 12 July, 1900, p. 16.
The first government car, purchased by the Carruthers Government, pictured at Corowa in 1906. On board, (left to right) E. B. Harkness, R.T. Ball, W. J. C. Elliott (driver) and Sir Joseph Carruthers.
before the 1907 state election. Hirers did not welcome the business. One increased his daily rate from £6 to £15 claiming that on a previous occasion his four seater cars had carried eight passengers at a time and had been returned with scratched paint work\textsuperscript{30}. A private owner who ran his car on behalf of the Liberals was alleged to have armed his drivers with whips to repel paint scratchers but his car was still damaged\textsuperscript{31}. Nevertheless it is clear that politicians had realised the utilitarian value of motor transport.

\[ \text{o - o - o} \]

While motorists remained few in number they could see themselves as a fraternity and the formation of automobile clubs gave form to this sentiment. In Britain the Automobile Club was formed in July 1897\textsuperscript{32} while the American Automobile Club was formed in June 1899\textsuperscript{33}. In New South Wales a club was formed in 1903. Harrie Skinner, acknowledged as the founder of the club, later stated that fear of Police persecution and the introduction of restrictive legislation had inspired him to initiate the move for a club\textsuperscript{34}. Skinner recalled that he left his car parked in the city and on his return was confronted by a constable who asserted that it was an offence to leave a vehicle unattended. Skinner agreed that it was

\begin{itemize}
  \item 30. Ibid., 14 August, 1907, p. 9.
  \item 31. Ibid., 11 September, 1907, p. 10.
  \item 34. Motor in Australia, 1 November, 1927, p. 19.
\end{itemize}
an offence to leave a horse unattended but as he had removed a part from the car's engine, rendering it immobile, the regulation had not been breached. The constable was unmoved but Skinner appealed to the Traffic Office where his view was upheld. Nevertheless Skinner interpreted the incident as a portent of tougher times for motorists and approached W.E. Fisher to organize a public meeting.

Due to stormy weather only Skinner, Fisher and H.A. Jones (Club President 1903-1908) attended the meeting. A second meeting on 20 March was better attended and it was resolved to form a club to be known as the Automobile Club of Australia (A.C.A.)\textsuperscript{35}. This pretention was to be resented in other states, especially in Victoria where a club was formed later in 1903. Other clubs were established in South Australia, in 1903, in Queensland, Western Australia and Northern Tasmania in 1905 and in Southern Tasmania in 1907\textsuperscript{36}.

Initially the ACA met in a room in Usher's Hotel. Although this proved unsatisfactory Mark Foy's offer of a rent free furnished room was rejected\textsuperscript{37}. Foy was a motor racing enthusiast whereas the majority of Club members preferred reliability trials and were perhaps reluctant to see Foy's influence within the Club increase. Club affairs

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., September, 1915, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{36} Australian encyclopedia, Sydney, Grolier Society, Vol. 6, pp. 180-181.

\textsuperscript{37} Automobile Club of Australia. General Committee Minutes, 25 August, 1904.
changed dramatically in 1905 following complaints by members that the Committees appointed to act in connection with the Gymkhana and the entertainment had shown little interest in their work. The Honorary Secretary was blamed for the situation and he consequently tendered his resignation at the Club meeting in December\textsuperscript{38}. The Secretary was persuaded to let his resignation stand over until the meeting of January 1906 when it was accepted.

Members were determined to advance from this point and in February 1906 it was resolved that the Club should secure its own rooms and appoint a paid Secretary\textsuperscript{39}. Money was raised by issuing 100 £5 debentures to members and rooms were taken in Phizackerly's building in Elizabeth Street. The new premises included reading, writing and billiard rooms. A liquor licence was obtained and so enhanced the Club's financial position that larger rooms in the basement of Challis House in Martin Place were opened in 1908. Among the new facilities was an afternoon tea room where members could entertain ladies\textsuperscript{40}. A paid secretary was not appointed until 1911 when J.H. Harris was employed.

The A.C.A. was an exclusive club. The Constitution, adopted on 3 December 1903, was based on the rules of the American Automobile Club, said to have more millionaire members

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 20 December, 1905.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 8 February, 1906.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 20 November, 1908.
than any other social club in the world. The A.C.A. adopted the membership ballot and set its annual subscription rate at £1.1.0. In 1904 an entrance fee of £1.1.0 was imposed and subscriptions increased to £2.2.0. A further subscription increase to £3.3.0 in 1907 reinforced the exclusiveness of the Club.

Elsewhere motor clubs were becoming more democratic. In Britain the Automobile Club established the Motor Union in 1901 to function as a service organization and pressure group. However the Automobile Association, established in 1905, rapidly eclipsed the Motor Union by offering better services and more vigorous political representation. In 1910 the Motor Union was absorbed by the Automobile Association leaving the Automobile Club as an isolated social club. Even the Automobile Club of Victoria, whose subscription rate was £1.1.0 in 1910, had a much wider membership than the A.C.A. However the A.C.A. remained content with its exclusive status. Apparently the Club understood the mood of New South Wales motorists because no viable democratic motorists organization emerged until the establishment of the National Roads and Motorists Association in 1924.

A number of prominent men joined the A.C.A. during its early years. The retailers Samuel Hordern snr. (President 1908 - 1909) and his son Sir Samuel Hordern (Treasurer 1905 -

41. America adopts the automobile, op. cit., p. 145.
42. Plowden, op. cit., p. 74.
1906, Secretary 1906 - 1907, Vice President 1909 - 1910, President 1910 - 1912, 1914 - 1930) were prominent in Club affairs. Colonel J.M. Arnott (Treasurer 1906 - 1908, Vice President 1910, 1918 - 1927, President 1912 - 1914), the biscuit manufacturer was another leading figure. Other wealthy members were the retailer Mark Foy and Major Philip Charley, one of the developers of Broken Hill. Well placed city men included W.C.H. Lippmann (Treasurer 1908 - 1911, 1922 - 1924), a bank manager, R.S. Gillett, who rose from salesman to general manager at Horderns, J.A. Minnett, New South Wales manager of the New Zealand Insurance Company, J.O. Fairfax of the Sydney Morning herald, Christopher Bennett, trustee of the Town and country journal and the Evening news and Sir Allen Taylor, a timber merchant and ship owner. Another member, aL. Blythe, described himself only as 'gentleman of Dumfries, Wollstonecraft'. The professions were represented by medical practitioners such as C.W. McCarthy, H.C. Hinder, Roland Pope, and A.E. Perkins, the prominent dentist J. Spencer Nolan, the barrister Harry Wainscott, the chemist L.W. Pye and the consulting engineer and patent attorney Fred Walsh.

Well placed country men joined the Club. Sir Samuel Hordern and Philip Charley owned substantial properties in Retford Park and Belmont Park respectively. The more genuine rural element was represented by squatters such as F. Chisholm of Kipjilan near Goulburn, J.B.N. Osborne of Bowylie, Gundaroo, John Robertson of Gogannon, Hay and Fred Duncan McMaster of Morven, Blackheath Cassils.
Motor traders were also admitted to the A.C.A. The British Automobile Club had been founded as a reaction against earlier trade dominated organisations although motor interests had later been admitted\(^43\). The A.C.A., with many members drawn from trade and commerce, readily admitted motor traders including C.O. Sherwood of the Dunlop Rubber Company, Charles Bennett, founder of Bennett and Wood, and T.D. Chapman, the motor trader who imported Sydney's first motor truck. In 1908 a move to provide separate trade sections in Club competitions failed\(^44\). This suggests that the majority of Club members were prepared to coexist with motor traders.

The participation of A.C.A. members in the Australian Volunteer Automobile Corps further illustrates their attitudes and status. Military authorities quickly recognised the potential of motor transport but did not immediately establish motor corps. Instead schemes were devised enabling the military to call on privately owned vehicles in times of emergency. The French army began experimenting with motor transport in 1897 and within a decade government subsidies were being paid to motor owners who undertook to place their cars at the disposal of the army in the event of mobilisation\(^45\). In Germany a volunteer

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 14.

\(^{44}\) Daily telegraph, 2 March 1908, p. 10.

\(^{45}\) America adopts the automobile, op. cit., p. 116.
automobile squad was established in 1899\textsuperscript{46}. Australian ideas on military transport were no more advanced. The Australian Parliament was unwilling to finance a large military establishment and the Defence Act of 1905 established the principle that Australian forces should consist almost entirely of citizen soldiers\textsuperscript{47}. The Australian Volunteer Automobile Corps conformed to this principle.

The A.C.A.'s association with the military began in 1907 when motorists were invited to participate in the annual New South Wales manoeuvres. Club members were assured that they would travel only on good roads and that they would be able to return home each evening\textsuperscript{48}. Apparently, the motorists proved useful because General Gordon, the New South Wales commandant, requested the A.C.A.'s assistance in forming a volunteer automobile corps\textsuperscript{49}. Gordon explained his plan at the Club's annual meeting in 1907\textsuperscript{50} and was invited to attend a special meeting on 12 December 1907 at which it was resolved to form the corps\textsuperscript{51}.

The federal government approved the regulations governing the Corps in 1908\textsuperscript{52}. Membership was restricted to qualified

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{48} Automobile Club of Australia Circular, 22 March 1907.

\textsuperscript{49} Daily telegraph, 2 November 1907, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 29 November 1907, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 14 December 1907, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 8 May 1908, p. 5.
drivers who owned an efficient automobile which they agreed to place on call for military purposes. During peace time only officers would be enrolled, commencing as lieutenants with the possibility of promotion to captain after 4 years service and to major after 8 years service. However Automobile Corps officers could not exercise command over members of any other branch of the army. One correspondent to the Daily telegraph complained that Automobile Corps officers should work their way up through the ranks in the same way as officers in existing local defence forces and that the Corps should be a balanced collection of officers and other ranks. Such criticisms went unheeded and the Corps was established as a gentleman's unit with members seeing their service as part of their social obligations. The Corps was not disbanded until 1915 when its officers were allowed to transfer to other units without loss of seniority or rank and a regular army motor corps was formed.

Although the A.C.A. was predominantly an exclusive social club it also functioned as a sporting body, a service organisation and a political pressure group. The Club's first sporting event was held on 5 December 1903 when members drove from Moore Street through the City to Centennial Park and then to Coogee. The press was invited to join this outing and the Club remained conscious of the publicity value of its events. The A.C.A.'s first competition was a

53. Ibid., 5 November 1907, p. 4.
hill climbing contest at Coogee in 1905. Later events included petrol consumption tests, reliability trials, social runs and outings for the inmates of various institutions. On a larger scale the Club organised the New South Wales section of the Dunlop Trials in 1905 and in 1908 held its own grand trial from Sydney to Bourke and return.

The A.C.A. also offered some services to its members. In 1904 the Club arranged to distribute petrol within a 25 mile radius of Sydney for the benefit of members and continually urged country storekeepers to stock petrol. Information on road conditions and touring facilities was collected and made available to members. In addition maps showing the location of police speed traps were displayed in the Club Rooms.

Although the A.C.A. did not develop into a widely based pressure group it did present the motorist's viewpoint on a number of issues. Prior to 1909 local councils were empowered to set speed limits within their boundaries. Parramatta Council imposed a 6 m.p.h. speed limit and in 1904 the Club wrote to the Council protesting against the limit. The Club emphasised its opposition to dangerous driving but requested a higher limit of 12 m.p.h. The A.C.A. pointed out that Parramatta was a popular destination for Club outings but that this might cease if the 6 m.p.h.

55. Ibid.
limit remained. Parramatta Council resolved to leave the matter in the hands of the Mayor on the understanding that the by-law would not be enforced in an unreasonable manner. Apparently the Club was not satisfied with this arrangement because in 1906 the Secretary was authorised to spend up to £5 entertaining Parramatta Councillors in a municipality with a higher limit to convince them that their limit was unnecessary. Despite these efforts the 6 m.p.h. limit was still in force in 1908.

The State Government had the power to control motor traffic in a broader way than local governments could and the A.C.A. made its views known in Macquarie Street. In 1905 the A.C.A. agreed to join the Motor Boat Club of New South Wales in making representations to the Government on the Inflammable Liquids Bill. Motorists often stored considerable quantities of petrol and, given the uncertainty of supplies, any legislation curtailing this practice was of great concern. In the event the issue vanished upon the withdrawal of the Bill.

The major concern for motorists during the 1900s was the possibility of new legislation controlling motor traffic. Initially the A.C.A. argued that legislation was unnecessary because motorists were gentlemen and could be trusted to act responsibly. However the Club did not cling naively to this

56. Daily telegraph, 23 November 1904, p. 5.
57. Ibid., 8 December 1908, p. 11.
58. Ibid., 4 September 1905, p. 3.
belief. In 1907 a circular was issued to members and 'as many other motorists as possible' calling on them to drive carefully and obey all the regulations. Drivers were also asked to assist in seeing that others observed the regulations. A list of 'Road Maxims for Motorists' followed, derived from the British journal The car, concluding with the exhortation: 'The road is free for all; therefore be courteous and considerate and ALWAYS DRIVE LIKE A GENTLEMAN.' The Club took firm action with competitors in Club events facing disqualification for breaking traffic regulations.

Despite the A.C.A.'s pleas it became apparent that legislation would be introduced and on 5 June 1908 a deputation put the Club's views before the Chief Secretary, W.H. Wood. Club president H.A. Jones complained about the number of prosecutions launched against motorists. C.E. Waters added his opinion that the police were giving fanciful evidence to support their cases and that the magistrates generally preferred to disbelieve motorists. Dr. Antill Pockley put the Club's view on traffic regulation asserting that all road users, not just motorists, should be licenced and their vehicles numbered. Pockley suggested a minimum age of 20 for licence applicants. He also asserted that a regulation prohibiting 'driving to the common danger' would be preferable to set speed limits which would be regarded as the accepted minimum regardless of the prevailing

59. A.C.A. General Committee Minutes, 18 April 1907.
60. Copy in N.S.W. Colonial Secretary special bundles 'Motor Traffic Act and Amendment 1905 - 1919' A.O.5/5325.
61. A.C.A. General Committee Minutes, 30 July 1907.
conditions. However if speed limits were set Pockley suggested a 15 m.p.h. speed limit in the city with no limit on the open road.

Wood denied the allegations of police persecution and magisterial bias but proved more sympathetic on other matters. The Deputation was assured that the Government would regulate and not restrict motor traffic. Wood reminded the Deputation that not all motorists were A.C.A. members and that some could not be trusted to drive carefully. This forced the Government to consider measures which would be unnecessary to control 'gentlemen of the standing' of A.C.A. members. After the passage of the Motor Traffic Act the Club shared in traffic regulation for a time. The Club was authorised to issue certificates to drivers who had passed its driving and traffic regulation tests. These certificates were accepted as a qualification for drivers licences.

The A.C.A. was sometimes criticised for its performance as an automobile club. According to the Daily telegraph the Automobile Club of Victoria believed that the A.C.A. '... has never been anything but a social club ... as compared with the A.C.V. ... the A.C.A. has done nothing to justify its existence as an automobile club ....' 63. The Telegraph dismissed the criticism as an example of interstate jealousy and Victorian resentment of the Sydney Club's use of the name Australian. Certainly the A.C.A. had proven itself

to be more than a social club but it remained less active than its Victorian counterpart. Perhaps, while Melbourne remained the federal capital, Victorian motorists, with both state and national governments at hand, were more politically conscious and aware of the value of a large membership to a lobbying group. In any case the socially exclusive gentlemen of the A.C.A. had no desire to operate as political lobbyists. A Melbourne journal made a fair assessment of the A.C.A.'s performance:

By promoting and successfully carrying out the club runs, reliability trials and hill climbs they have done much to bring before the public of New South Wales the many advantages of the internal combustion engine, and to them is due in a great measure the already large and rapidly increasing use of motor cars.64

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The commercial applications of motor transport were also explored between 1900 and 1909. In November 1904 three cars were licenced to ply for hire, '... the first known instance in Australia of public vehicles propelled by mechanical power.'65 Taxi cabs fitted with meters to record fares were introduced in 190966.

Motor vehicles were more readily applied to passenger than to goods traffic. In 1905 eleven applications to operate

64. Australian motorist, 20 April 1909, p. 403.
66. Ibid., 1909, p. 21.
bus services were submitted. Collectively the services would have linked Circular Quay with the Town Hall and with Redfern Railway Station, the G.P.O. with City Road, and the suburbs of Balmain, Glebe, Darlinghurst, Waverly, Newtown, Darlington and Centennial Park with various points in the city. The promoters were brave men because Britain's first motor buses, which operated in Edinburgh from 1898 until 1901, accumulated a loss of £14,000.

The Police had the power to determine the fate of the applications but the Inspector General sought advice from the Railway Commissioners. The Commissioners expressed opposition to the licencing of buses in areas already served by trams. The Commissioners pointed to the congestion of city streets and suggested that neither the trams nor the buses would benefit from competition. However the Commissioners had no objections to the licencing of buses in areas not served by trams.

The City Council was also consulted and the Works Committee recommended approval of the applications noting that motor buses would do less damage to the roads than horse buses had done. When the matter was discussed in full council some aldermen expressed opposition with

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70. Ibid., p. 160.
Alderman Kelly objecting to '... these petrol stinkpots running along the streets to the annoyance of citizens.' 71 The Works Committee was directed to reconsider its recommendation and subsequently decided to recommend the acceptance of only nine of the applications 72. The Council decided to accept the recommendation although some aldermen objected to the danger to pedestrians and the unnecessary competition with the trams 73. Those aldermen and the Railway Commissioners foresaw the main difficulties associated with bus services which were to become acute in the 1920's.

No subsequent reports were discovered indicating how many, if any, of the services commenced operating. It was reported that a Mosman Motor Bus Company had been floated in 1905 74. In addition services were reported to be operating between Manly and Newport and between Manly and Pittwater in 1906 75.

The Railway Commissioners' venture into bus transport is more clearly documented. On 4 April 1905 the Commissioners asked the Premier to approve the experimental use of buses to supplement the trams. The Commissioners asserted that buses could not compete with the trams over long distances.

71. Daily telegraph, 5 April 1905, p. 11.
74. Ibid., 27 September 1905, p. 8.
75. Ibid., 8 February 1906, p. 6.
but might be useful '... on selected portions of existing routes, or along parallel streets.' The Commissioners also argued that by establishing their own bus services they could forestall competition from private operators and protect the public investment in the trams. Following Cabinet approval enabling legislation was passed and four steam bus chassis were ordered in England. Orders for the buses' bodies were placed locally.

The Commissioners service commenced on 4 December 1905 between Potts Point, William Street and Oxford Street. The public spurned the service, largely because of lack of comfort and frequent breakdowns, and it was terminated in April 1906. The buses then operated between Enmore and Marrickville until they were withdrawn from service on 29 May 1906. Overall the buses accumulated a loss of £1,334 and even failed to win passengers away from the horse bus on the Potts Point route. A representative of the chassis makers claimed that the locally built bodies had allowed insufficient leg room for passengers and were half ton too heavy causing undue wear on tyres and wheels. The chassis makers were not blameless because frequent engine

77. N.S.W. Parliament Debates, 10 July 1906, Volume 22, p. 389.
78. Daily telegraph, 6 April 1906, p. 6.
80. Ibid.
81. Daily telegraph, 8 February 1906, p. 4.
failures had tested the patience of passengers. The Commissioners were not alone in their failure. In London 33 services had commenced between 1904 and 1908 but in 1908 only 11 survived and only 3 had operated for the entire period. When the Road Car and Vanguard bus companies were merged with the Greater London Omnibus Company it was revealed that the three companies had a combined operating loss of £250,000 per annum.

Sydneysiders were slower to adopt the motor truck and van. Sydney's first truck arrived in 1908 and in 1909 it was reported that there were only 5 trucks in the city with 20 on order. Several writers noted that motor traction was adopted more readily in Melbourne than in Sydney. One suggested that the smoother streets of Melbourne were better suited to motor transport and made tyre costs a lesser consideration in the southern capital.

Some commercial operators believed that the horse was better suited to their needs. As late as 1929 Mr. F. Bowman, a representative of the Master Bakers Association, stated that none of his Association's members favoured the use of motor vehicles. The faithful horse, which moved from house to house of its own accord once it had learnt the delivery routine, offered clear advantages to bakers and other

82. Hibbs, op. cit., p. 52.
83. Ibid., p. 54.
85. Ibid., 1 July 1910, p. 9.
86. Coach and motor body builder, 15 June 1929, p. 73.
delivery men. Furthermore horses struggled to cope with the steep grades around Sydney and business men may have been reluctant to risk untried machines under arduous conditions. However cost was probably the main barrier. In 1929 C.D. Hardingham, Transport Manager for Merchants Ltd., claimed that the cost of running a motor lorry was almost five times that of maintaining a pair of horses and a dray.

Although motor transport was adopted slowly its potential was not ignored. In 1904 the Police reported that motor cars were increasingly used to carry goods in Sydney. In the same year Sydney Metropolitan Fire Brigade took delivery of a 20 h.p. chemical fire engine which could carry eight fire men and a driver at 20 m.p.h. Not all motor transport ventures succeeded and in 1909 the Australian motorist told the doleful tale of a £900 truck imported by a 'prominent Sydney firm of brewers'. The brewers had the truck dismantled and reassembled but found it unsuitable after only 30 miles of deliveries and sold it for half its cost. The new owner also dismantled the truck but in reassembling it left out a considerable portion of the gear box. The truck worked satisfactorily with its deficient gear box but again failed to meet its owners' requirements and was sold. When the third owner dismantled the truck he discovered that the gear box was incomplete and began 'chasing all over

87. Ibid.
88. N.S.W. Police Department Annual report 1904, p. 8.
89. Australasian cyclist and motor car world, 24 November 1904, p. 19.
90. Australian motorist, August 1909, p. 629.
Sydney' to locate the missing parts. The result of his search was not reported.

Despite setbacks the effectiveness of motor traction had been demonstrated by 1909. In November 1909 a Commer commercial vehicle was matched against the best horse team working for David Jones Ltd. Each had to transport 2 tons of furniture from Berkshire Park, 12 miles from Blacktown, to Sydney. The truck gave the horse team 2½ hours start, passed it before it had reached Blacktown, and completed the journey in 9 hours. The horses took more than two days to complete the journey.

When considering the early impact of motor transport it should be remembered that road transport had been changing since the 1880s. If tram employees are included road transport grew from the smallest of the transport employers in 1891 to the largest in 1911 (see Table 1). Horse transport enjoyed a boom following the introduction of the sulky, copied from an American design about 1884, and the evolution of the bent shaft sulky in 1893 - 94. The sulky allowed one horse to transport two passengers and a light load thus doubling the usefulness of the saddle horse. Furthermore the sulky sold for about half the price of a gig. The number of horses in New South Wales declined following the economic recession of the 1890s but increased as

92. *Coach and motor body builder*, 15 April 1911, p. 35.
93. Ibid., p. 36.
prosperity returned (see Table 2). A comparison of the types of horses in use (Table 3) reveals that the increase occurred for all classes of horses.

The metropolitan area did not share in the increase in the number of horses. Horses remained important in the carrying trade but became less significant in passenger transport (Table 4). The number of horse buses declined as the electric tram gained popularity. A contemporary report noted that the trams, introduced on the North Shore in 1893 and in the city proper in 1899, '... had the not altogether unexpected effect of completely demoralizing the omnibus business. Even lines which are not likely to be affected for years regard their elimination as simply a matter of time.'\textsuperscript{94} Not only did the trams win passengers away from horse services their presence increased traffic congestion thus making the passage of horse vehicles more difficult. Another factor discouraging the use of horses was the rise in real estate values which made city land too expensive to be used for stables\textsuperscript{95}. By 1909, despite the fact that the trams were already failing to meet peak hour demand, it was clear that horses could not compete in the field of urban mass passenger transport.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 15 September 1900, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 15 April 1911, p. 33.
30.

Table 1*

Number of employees in transport industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rail</th>
<th>Road**</th>
<th>Sea</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>7,921</td>
<td>7,696</td>
<td>10,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>9,731</td>
<td>13,106</td>
<td>15,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>17,210</td>
<td>18,982</td>
<td>17,637</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Compiled from Censuses 1891, 1901, 1911.
**Includes tramway employees.

Table 2*

Number of horses in New South Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Horses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>486,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>450,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>458,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>482,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>506,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>537,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>578,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>591,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>604,784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Official yearbook of New South Wales 1909 - 10, p. 237
Table 3*

Types of horses in New South Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1904</th>
<th>1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draught</td>
<td>131,388</td>
<td>205,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light harness</td>
<td>109,311</td>
<td>144,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddle</td>
<td>159,217</td>
<td>192,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No return</td>
<td>82,747</td>
<td>107,942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Official yearbook of New South Wales 1905, p. 273, 1911, p. 389

Table 4

Metropolitan Public Vehicles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CAB</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>VAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>1,019</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>2,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>577*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>880</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>843</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>818</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>800</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reduction due to an alteration in the law which exempted from registration all vehicles used for hire but not plying for hire.

Compiled from N.S.W. Police Department Annual Reports.
Thomson of Melbourne began building steam cars in 1896 and sold $10^96$. Harley Tarrant, also of Melbourne, built 10 or 12 petrol powered cars between 1901 and 1907$^97$. These manufacturers, lacking capital and markets, could not compete with overseas manufacturers who had achieved economies of scale through mass production techniques. Whereas the 2 cylinder Tarrant cost £375 the 4 cylinder Model S Ford was marketed at £250$^98$. This parallels the American experience where a large number of manufacturers emerged initially but only those who achieved mass production survived.

The failure of the manufacturers contrasts with the success of local body builders. The coach building trade declined following the introduction of the sulky and the consequent reduction in demand for coach work. The trade revived when a demand developed for motor vehicle bodies, to fit to imported chassis, and for replacement panels. In 1906 Sydney Technical College advertised for an instructor to reintroduce the coach building course which had lapsed 15 years previously$^99$.

A number of New South Wales coach builders undertook motor body building. Angus and Son, the firm which built the bodies for the Railway Commissioners buses, added a

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97. Ibid., p. 2.
98. Ibid.
fourth floor to their Castlereagh Street building in 1908 to house their motor department. S. Wright of Harris Street, Ultimo also entered the motor body building industry. The business was established by John Wright in 1869 and initially produced ploughs and other implements. In 1878, when American ploughs began to dominate the market, Harris turned to carriage building and won contracts to build delivery vans for Horderns. John Wright retired in 1907 leaving his son in charge. The firm began building motor bodies in 1911 and in 1912 built the bodies for Hordern's first fleet of motor vans. Another coach builder to make the transition was W.H. Peters who, by 1924, was employing 100 hands to build commercial motor bodies in his factory in Phillip Street, Redfern. Frank Grimley, who began as a coach builders' supplier in 1885, began stocking motor body builders supplies and was one of the first wholesaleers to import large quantities of motor vehicle replacement parts.

Horse vehicle builders were also prominent in the American motor industry. Studebaker built both horse carriages and motor vehicles until 1919 when they turned exclusively to motor production. Billy Durant, 'the foremost figure in the horse-drawn vehicle industry of the United States' took over the Buick Motor Company in 1904 and in

100. Ibid., 15 October 1908, p. 195.
1. Ibid., 15 July 1923, p. 67.
2. Ibid., 15 February 1924, p. 189.
1908 amalgamated Buick with Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Pontiac and Chevrolet to form General Motors.\(^5\)

Not all Sydney body builders successfully adapted to the motor age. During the 1890's seven major coach builders and one carriage importer were located in Castlereagh Street between Circular Quay and King Street. By 1911 only two, Angus and Son and Haining and Son, remained.\(^6\)

By world standards the motor trade developed late in New South Wales. Pre 1900 developments were reported in the press and must have been witnessed by colonial gentlemen visiting Britain and other countries. Overseas bicycle and carriage makers quickly entered the motor industry and since 721 horse carriages and 101,403 bicycles were imported into New South Wales in 1900 it is reasonable to assume that local dealers had contacts in the motor trade. However motor vehicles were not imported until 1900. The earliest cars were often custom made and while the domestic market could absorb their output the manufacturers may have ignored export markets. In addition the economic recession which lingered in Australia until 1905 dampened enthusiasm for untried luxuries.

Bicycle manufacturers and dealers were among the first motor traders in New South Wales. W.J.C. Elliott, who

\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 235-236.

\(^6\) Coach and motor body builder, 15 April 1911, p. 30.
imported Sydney's first motor car, was a member of the Austral Cycle Agency. Bennett and Wood, established in 1892, the makers of speedwell cycles, became prominent in the motor trade. When motor traders were first listed in Sands Directory, in 1906, six of the twenty listed traders were bicycle dealers.\(^7\)

Bicycle manufacturers had also played a leading role in the motor industry overseas. In the United States, Colonel Albert A. Pope, originally a bicycle manufacturer, was the world's largest automobile manufacturer in 1899.\(^8\) Pope's belief that buyers would prefer steam engined vehicles to those powered by the internal combustion engine caused his downfall. Conversely the British firm Starleys, who produced the world's first safety bicycle, chose the internal combustion engine to power their Rover cars.

The motor trade also attracted men from other backgrounds. Peter McIntosh, a storekeeper and flour miller, joined Alick McNeil in a Buick agency in 1910.\(^9\) Boyd Edkins, founder of Boyded Ltd. and a well known inter-city record breaker, was a station manager and stock agent before entering the motor trade in Queensland in 1910.\(^10\) Edkins moved to Sydney in 1912.

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8. Crabb, op. cit., p. 35.
Repairing and servicing of vehicles and the retailing of petrol, tyres and parts provided employment for a number of people. William Burton Hipsley, a manufacturer of sheep shearing equipment, was asked, in 1903, to cut a set of replacement gears for a car. Hipsley continued manufacturing motor parts until 1925 thereafter concentrating on importing parts\textsuperscript{11}.

Unfortunately official statistics, which did not distinguish between horse and motor trade establishments, do not reveal the growth of the motor trade. However from 1903 the journal of the carriage building industry regularly featured information on motoring business suggesting that it had become substantial enough to interest the journal's readers. In 1908 C.E. Waters, a member of the A.C.A. deputation to the Chief Secretary, claimed that over £1,000,000 had been invested in the motor industry. Waters added that £1000,000 was being spent annually on vehicle maintenance giving employment to 228 tradesmen as car repairers and 50 as bicycle repairers\textsuperscript{12}. Sands directory of 1909 listed 43 motor traders\textsuperscript{13}. The Australian census

\textsuperscript{11} Motor Traders Association Journal, 15 March 1930, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{12} Report of Automobile Club of Australia deputation to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 5 June 1908, p. 5. N.S.W. Colonial Secretary special bundles 'Motor Traffic Act and Amendment 1905 - 1919'. A.O.5/5325.

\textsuperscript{13} Sands directory for 1909, p. 1575.
of 1911 revealed that 284 New South Welshmen were employed as bicycle or motor car importers, dealers or agents, 435 as motor garage keepers, chauffeurs and taxi drivers and 1,267 as bicycle or motor car repairers\textsuperscript{14}.

Naturally motorists welcomed the expansion of the motor trade and the wider availability of fuel and service facilities. The rise of the motor trade also established a capitalist interest and a source of employment which governments were likely to consider when contemplating measures calculated to restrict or discourage motoring.

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Although the motor vehicle was welcomed by some, many others found the growth of motor traffic disquieting. Little of the opposition could be attributed to class antagonism. One anonymous correspondent to the \textit{Daily telegraph} called for traffic legislation:

\ldots to show the above class of motor gentry that they do not own Australia \ldots. We often hear of class legislation but it appears to me that there is no legislation for the motor-car and motor-bicycle class. Why? surely not because they are principally the money class.\textsuperscript{15}

However such utterances were rare. This parallels the American experience where Flink cites few examples of class antagonism\textsuperscript{16}. As motoring was adopted only by a section of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Census 1911, p. 1286.
\item[16] \textit{America adopts the automobile}, op. cit., pp. 65-6.
\end{footnotes}
the monied classes it is understandable that antagonism did not conform to class lines. In Britain, on the other hand, there is evidence that motoring was seen as a predominantly middle class interest and was viewed with suspicion by the upper classes.  

In New South Wales opposition to motoring does not appear to have been based on sectionalism. British rural interests, of all classes, were plainly hostile towards motorists. However the dust raised by motor vehicles created more intense annoyance in the closely settled rural areas of Britain than in the relatively sparsely settled Australian bush. According to Flink American farmers were hostile towards motorists between 1904 and 1906 but returning prosperity and the arrival of the Model T Ford enabled the farmers to join the motoring ranks. The same was probably true of the wealthier Australian farmers.

Anxiety about motor traffic tended to arise from concrete problems. Trams and trains, the latter travelling at 10 to 30 m.p.h., accustomed people to speeds greater than those achieved by animal drawn vehicles, but were confined to their tracks. The speeding automobile could appear suddenly on the quietest country road or suburban street. Furthermore speeds regarded as dangerous were quite moderate by current standards. The A.C.A.'s annual report for 1906

18. America adopts the automobile, op. cit., p. 70.
commented that it was unwise to publish point to point times in Club trials:

The distances are known and the general public see that so and so's car averaged something well over 20 miles an hour and to do that, as we all know, the car must have been doing something well over thirty at some point of the journey .... if we go advertising the fact that car owners are careering all over the country at break-neck speeds, panic legislation will be rushed through and we shall have laws passed that will hamper our favourite sport very considerably.¹⁹

The shock of the new means of transport was heightened by the behaviour of some drivers. The term 'scorching' was soon coined to describe speeding. In 1906 it was alleged that 'It is notorious that motorists everywhere are reckless of other people's safety and some of them take manifest delight in witnessing the injuries they inflict.'²⁰ Two years later the Daily telegraph commented that the motorist had '... come to be looked upon as a heartless being, for the most part driving heedlessly on his way, even if that should be over people or close enough to unsettle their nerves indefinitely.'²¹ However accident statistics (Table 5) do not support such pronouncements and scorchers were probably in a minority. J.C.L. Fitzpatrick claimed that 'The considerate motorist will welcome reasonable legislation, and only he who wished to race like mad, here there and everywhere, raising dust and knocking down those who bar the way will object.'²²

²¹. Ibid., 27 October 1908, p. 6.
²². Ibid., 5 June 1908, p. 11.
### Table 5

**Vehicle accidents reported to Police in the Metropolitan District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUSE</th>
<th>TRAM</th>
<th>CAB</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>MOTOR</th>
<th>CYCLE</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled from Police Department *Annual Reports*, 1903 - 1909.

K. = Killed; I. = Injured.
Even the cautious motorist could give offence through the dust his vehicle raised. Pedestrians, householders, those with roadside crops or gardens and local councillors, whose roads were broken down to create the dust, all condemned the dust nuisance. Some motorists claimed that there would be no dust problem if sealed roads were constructed. However the cost of upgrading the roads to meet the motorists' requirements would be high and measures, such as strict speed limits, which would preserve the existing roads were favoured by some people.

The noise, smoke and fumes issuing from motor vehicles also attracted criticism. It was reported that the '... procession of snorting and evil smelling motor cars ...' which travelled along Pittwater Road passed Manly Methodist Church where '... the nerve racking noise and unsavoury odours are said to regularly distort the features of the attendant worshippers.'\(^{23}\) Unfortunately the exhaust and silencing systems of the earliest cars left much to be desired leading G.A. Jones M.L.A. to describe them as 'engines of destruction and evil smells.'\(^{24}\)

In addition to annoying people motor vehicles frightened horses. Reminiscing in 1929 Sir Joseph Carruthers claimed that horse owners were often more afraid of motor vehicles than were their beasts.

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The country folk sometimes appeared to think the car was a visitation of the Devil, for it was nothing uncommon on meeting a sulky to see the occupants precipitately pull up, leave the horse standing and scale the nearest fence.²⁵

Carruthers may have exaggerated but there were incidents which alarmed horse owners. In 1906 at Penrith a three horse team drawing an Arnotts van bolted after being frightened by a motor car. The horses sped off towards St. Marys with their driver, who had been picked up by the offending motorist, in pursuit. The car overtook the horses in St. Marys where the van driver was able to stop the team with no real damage having been done²⁶. Horses working in the metropolitan area soon became inured to motor vehicles but their owners, recognising the threat to their livelihood, harboured resentments. Even in April 1900 the Thomson steam car on exhibition at the Easter Show was driven around Sydney 'Amid the jeers of bus drivers and cabbies ...'²⁷

Initially the authorities attempted to regulate motor traffic within the existing system of traffic control. Regulation of wheeled road vehicles began in 1835 when stage carriages came under government control²⁸. In 1847 the City Council was given control over hackney coaches operating within the city and 8 miles beyond its boundaries. Carters and drivers came under the same jurisdiction in 1854. The Municipalities Acts of 1858 and 1867 empowered Councils to regulate and licence porters, public carriers, carters,

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²⁵ Motor in Australia, 1 June 1929, p. 17.
²⁶ Daily telegraph, 26 September 1906, p. 15.
²⁷ Ibid., 25 April 1900, p. 5.
water drawers and public vehicles. Because the city jurisdiction preceded the incorporation of the suburban municipalities other councils within the 8 mile radius were obliged to defer to the City Council in traffic regulation. This, in effect, limited the suburban municipalities to collecting fixed charges on vehicles as compensation for wear and tear on the streets\textsuperscript{29}. The municipalities resented the City Council's powers and criticised the laxity of the City's administration. In 1870 a Parliamentary Select Committee was appointed to examine the problem. Following the Committee's deliberations the Public Vehicles Regulation Act of 1873 established a Board of Transit Commissioners to control public vehicles operating within the Sydney Police District\textsuperscript{30}. The City Council retained control over private traffic.

Divided traffic control proved unsatisfactory and in 1900 the Metropolitan Traffic Act transferred the powers of the Transit Commission and the traffic powers of the City Council to the Inspector General of Police. A Police Traffic Branch was established. The Act was not designed to control motor traffic but commercial motor vehicles were subject to regulation and registration under its provisions. In addition regulations under the Act empowered Police to '... give such reasonable directions to all persons driving, riding, walking or being upon the carriageway of any public

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 72.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 80.
street as may, ... be necessary for the safe regulation of traffic thereon. 31

The Metropolitan Traffic Act imposed a speed limit of 8 m.p.h. within a four mile radius of the G.P.O. Elsewhere in the metropolitan area local councils set their own limits. Parramatta, for example, chose 6 m.p.h. while Hunters Hill favoured 10 m.p.h. The Police tried to enforce the various speed limits and established 'speed traps' in order to secure firm evidence for prosecutions. Motorists resented these 'traps'. C.H. Waters, a member of the 1908 A.C.A. deputation to the Chief Secretary complained that he '... felt humiliated from the fact of policemen hiding in bushes in order to catch motorists.' 32 In its first issue the Motor in Australia published a map showing the location of 14 speed traps within a 15 mile radius of Sydney. 33 This action was criticised in the Legislative Assembly but the Chief Secretary stated that there were no grounds on which to prosecute the journal. 34

Motorists were also prosecuted for 'furious driving'. This charge originally applied to the driving of horses and the physical state of a horse generally revealed whether or


32. Report of Automobile Club of Australia deputation to N.S.W. Colonial Secretary, 5 June 1908, p. 2. N.S.W. Colonial Secretary special bundles 'Motor Traffic Act and Amendment 1905 - 1919' A.O.5/5325.


34. Ibid., 21 October 1909, p. 11.
not it had been driven furiously. Motorists felt that it was more a matter of opinion whether or not a motor vehicle had been driven furiously. According to motorists the courts preferred to accept police opinions in furious driving cases and prosecutions were bitterly resented.

Overseas general speed limits had been set by law. The British Locomotives on Highways Act of 1896 imposed a uniform 12 m.p.h. speed limit\(^{35}\). The Motor Car Act of 1904 increased the limit to 20 m.p.h. but empowered the Local Government Board, acting on the advice of a local authority, to impose a 10 m.p.h. limit in any specified area. The Act also made it an offence to drive recklessly, negligently or at a speed or in a manner dangerous to the public\(^{36}\). In the United States New York State imposed a 20 m.p.h. limit in 1901\(^{37}\). By 1909 a 25 m.p.h. limit applied in 11 States, a 20 m.p.h. limit in 14 states, and a 15 m.p.h. limit in 5 states. In addition Texas had an 18 m.p.h. limit, Maryland a 12 m.p.h. limit and Alabama an 8 m.p.h. limit\(^{38}\). While limits were low by current standards they were at least uniform within each state.

None of the existing legislation in New South Wales provided for the licencing of drivers or the registration

\(^{35}\) Plowden, op. cit., p. 12.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 43.

\(^{37}\) America adopts the automobile, p. 184.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 186.
of vehicles. This omission attracted considerable criticism. Some people claimed that motorists ignored policemen's signals and also sped away after accidents knowing that their unnumbered vehicles could not be positively identified. The lack of an adequate police motor patrol increased the fleeing motorists immunity. In 1908 it was reported that police had stretched a rope across Rocky Point Road to force motorists to halt at the end of a speed trap\(^{39}\). The Police denied the allegation but the public credence given to the report is a comment on the popular perception of police frustration. Pressure for the registration of motor vehicles mounted and in 1907 the Sydney City Council asked the Chief Secretary to introduce the necessary legislation\(^{40}\). In 1909 a number of other councils, including Singleton, Shellharbour and Bowral repeated the request\(^{41}\). Other bodies, including the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, supported the councils' pleas\(^{42}\).

The demand for registration and licencing systems raised the question of how such systems would be financed and, by implication, the question of motor taxation. Motorists consistently opposed special motor taxes branding them 'class taxation'. Ideally, motorists believed, costs

\(^{39}\) Daily telegraph, 11 May 1908, p. 6.

\(^{40}\) Town Clerk, Sydney City Council to acting Under Secretary for Finance and Trade, 23 May 1907, Colonial Secretary special bundles 'Motor Traffic Act and Amendment 1905 - 1919'. A.O.5/5325.

\(^{41}\) Town Clerk, Singleton to James Fallick M.P., 4 June 1909, ibid.

\(^{42}\) Secretary, Sydney Chamber of Commerce to Chief Secretary, 28 November 1907, ibid.
arising from motoring should be met from general revenue because the whole community benefitted from the growth of motor transport. If motor taxes were imposed motorists believed that the revenue should be devoted to projects such as road building which directly benefitted motoring.

In practice the argument was lost before it had begun. The federal government, restricted by the Braddon clause of the constitution, had imposed revenue raising customs duties on motor vehicles in 1902. The New South Wales government had imposed fees to finance the registration system established by the Metropolitan Traffic Act and could be expected to apply the same principle to motor registration. Furthermore the state government had spent large sums and incurred huge debts in providing tram and train services and was unlikely to welcome new commitments for transport. However the government ignored suggestions of punitive taxation rates of £10 p.a. or £20 p.a. to discourage the use of automobiles. In 1908 Chief Secretary Wood assured an A.C.A. deputation that fees would be kept to the level necessary to finance the proposed registration and licencing systems. The eventual fees of 5/- for a car driver's licence, £1-0-0 for car registration and 2/6 for motor cycle registration fulfilled Wood's promise.

Pressure for motor legislation mounted from 1905. In 1904 the Police reported that 'Generally speaking ... (cars) are well and carefully driven, but in some instances inexperienced or reckless drivers have given grounds for
complaints ... the matter is being carefully watched. 43

In 1905 J.R. Dacey asked in the Legislative Assembly if the Premier was

... aware of the great danger to life and limb owing to the furious driving of motor vehicles throughout the State? If so will he take an early opportunity to bring in a bill to regulate the speed at which these vehicles may be driven on the high roads? 44

Premier Carruthers replied

I have not noticed the danger, except while sitting in one of the motor cars myself, but I imagine there will be danger ... I will have the matter looked into, and if it is found that the law does not provide for regulating the speed of these vehicles a short bill will be introduced. 45

In fact the Traffic Superintendent, Alfred Edward, after consulting the A.C.A., and J.H. Want, Adrian Knox and E.P. Simpson, 'prominent legal men' who also drove motor cars, had already drafted a bill based on British and American legislation. The bill had been forwarded to the Chief Secretary's Department on 13 July 1905. 46

Once the bill had been drafted the Police began pressing for its passage but it proceeded at a remarkably leisurely pace. South Australia's Motor Traffic Act was passed in 1904 but both Victoria and New South Wales introduced bills

43. N.S.W. Police Department Annual report, 1904, p. 8.
45. Ibid.
46. Inspector General of Police to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, 13 July 1905, Colonial Secretary special bundles 'Motor Traffic Act and Amendment 1905 - 1919' A.O.5/5325.
in 1905 which did not pass until 1909. The New South Wales bill was introduced in the Legislative Council, rather than the Assembly, suggesting that the Government did not regard it as a controversial party measure. Perhaps the small number of motor accident casualties encouraged complacency. In addition Carruthers may have been reluctant to clamp down on his fellow motorists although no evidence of motorists using their influence to delay or emasculate the bill was found. The file on the bill carries a note by Carruthers, dated 9 November 1906, directing that 'In any motor bill the speed should not be specified but the general provision against negligent and furious driving provided.' This provision was included in the British Act and was not a pro-motor clause. It places the onus on the driver to decide what speed is safe under the prevailing conditions. The local Police accepted the idea because they favoured the fixing of speed limits by regulation. Above all the Carruthers Government (30 August 1904 - 1 October 1907) had more pressing problems especially in its land and railway scandals. Even the Wade Government (2 October 1907 - 20 October 1910) could plead preoccupation with labour unrest.

The Motor Traffic Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council by the Government representative, John Hughes, on 29 November 1905. The bill did not proceed beyond its first reading being allowed to lapse upon the prorogation of Parliament.

47. Ibid.
Parliamentary questions were asked concerning the fate of the Bill without result until, on 19 November 1907, J.C.L. Fitzpatrick moved the adjournment of the Assembly to discuss the immediate necessity of legislation to fix speed limits\textsuperscript{49}. Fitzpatrick's motion was defeated but on 28 November Hughes reintroduced his Bill in the Council. However the Council rejected as too generous clauses earmarking half the registration fees as a fund to be spent for the benefit of motorists and allowing for the release of anyone arrested for a motoring offence if they undertook to answer the charges when required and deposited a sum equal to the maximum fine for the offence or, alternatively, left their car as security. Following the rejection of these clauses the Bill was withdrawn and it was not until November 1908 that a revised Bill was passed by the Council.

The Chief Secretary, W.H. Wood, introduced the Bill into the Legislative Assembly on 3 August 1909. In his second reading speech Wood explained that '... motor vehicles are coming into such general use that for the protection of the public it is found necessary that something should be done to licence and control them.'\textsuperscript{50} Wood added that the Government had no wish to restrict motoring but recognised the necessity of regulation '... not merely because of the number of people who use motor vehicles but ... on account

\textsuperscript{49.} Ibid., 19 November 1907, Vol. 27, p. 1083.

\textsuperscript{50.} Ibid., 4 August 1909, Vol. 33, p. 1007.
of the class of people who use them in the sense that some people are utterly inconsiderate and apparently reckless as to what may happen. The Bill passed its third reading on 2 September 1909.

The Motor Traffic Act of 1909 established a uniform, state wide traffic code. Wood explained that it was government policy to establish uniformity in the administration of Acts which imposed penalties and restrictions upon individuals. Local governments did not welcome the curtailment of their powers. However Superintendent Edward was later to assert that

... it was found that some suburban councils boosted the amount of revenue they obtained from prosecutions of motorists for small breaches of the law, and the Act was so framed ... that there would be no inducement to councils to add to their revenues by such means.

Those who wished to condemn the Motor Traffic Act as a centralist measure might also have complained that it was conducive to government by regulation. Many rules, notably speed limits, were not defined in the Act but were left to be gazetted as regulations. This was not an unusual practice

51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., p. 1009.
53. Traffic Superintendent to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 8 January 1916. N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department correspondence received. A.O. ref. 5/7429, no. 28786.
and Wood explained that since no Act could cover every contingency traffic control could better be established through regulations. Certainly traffic experts could implement their policies with little delay through gazetted regulations.

Enforcement of the Act was the responsibility of the Police Traffic Branch. Since the Police were the established law enforcement agency it was logical to have traffic law enforced by them. However the wealthier classes, who had previously seen the police mainly as defenders of property and law and order, as motorists came into a different relationship with the force. During the debate on the Bill the clause allowing the police to ask any motorist to produce his licence and state his name and address even when there was no reason to believe an offence had been committed was criticised. Edward pointed out that a similar clause in the Metropolitan Traffic Act had never been queried and added that the power was necessary for the apprehension of unlicenced drivers. Impertinent though it may have been for Edward to suggest that what was good enough for 'cabbies', bus and lorry drivers was good enough for gentlemen motorists the clause was retained.


55. Traffic Superintendent to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, 3 September 1909, N.S.W. Colonial Secretary special bundles 'Motor Traffic Act and Amendment 1905 - 1919'. A.O.5/5325.
Regulations under the Motor Traffic Act were gazetted on 8 March 1910\textsuperscript{56}. All motor vehicles were required to be registered and carry number plates. The minimum ages for applicants for drivers' licences and motor cycle licences were set at 18 and 16 respectively although the Inspector General of Police could licence any younger person he considered competent. The Inspector General could also refuse to licence anyone who had ever been convicted of drunken, furious or reckless driving and anyone whom he considered unfit to hold a licence. A 15 m.p.h. speed limit was imposed within a 5 mile radius of the G.P.O. and within the boundaries of any city. Additional limits of 4 m.p.h. applied to cars turning the corner from one street into another in any city or when passing on the near side of a stationary tram and 6 m.p.h. when crossing an intersection. Local councils could apply to the Chief Secretary for permission to erect speed limit signs in specific areas. The regulations also prohibited dangerous driving. Horses were protected by the regulations requiring motorists to stop at the request of anyone in charge of a restive horse and forbidding motorists from carrying any sign on their cars likely to frighten horses. Finally motorists were not allowed to obstruct any person or vehicle, create undue noise or smoke or 'be guilty of any insulting behaviour.' Maximum penalties were set at £20 for breaches of the Act and £10 for breaches of the Regulations.

\textsuperscript{56} N.S.W. Government Gazette, 8 March 1910, no. 34, pp. 1375-83.
The Police were generally satisfied with their Act commenting that

Whilst it will probably be impossible to control motor vehicles so as to remove all causes of public complaint, it may be reasonably anticipated that the enforcement of the new law will generally meet public requirements and be in the interests of all reputable motorists. 57

Motorists generally accepted the Act and were certainly better off under a uniform traffic code enforced by a single authority. The clauses protecting horses were criticised but this issue died away as the number of horses on city streets declined. Overall most motorists felt that the Act would work well providing the Police chose to enforce it in a reasonable manner.

In 1907 the Daily telegraph claimed that 'The motor car has now shaken off its merely festive character and taken its place ... among the serious facts of modern life.' 58 By 1909 motorists were confident that the automobile would replace the horse as the main force in road transport. The potential of motor transport had been demonstrated and if the Motor Traffic Act imposed some restrictions it also constituted official recognition that motor vehicles would travel the roads of New South Wales for many years to come.

57. N.S.W. Police Department Annual report, 1909, p. 21.
Chapter 2: Motoring in Transition

The years between 1910 and 1919 may be seen as a period of transition in the history of motor transport in New South Wales. Motorists continued to be drawn from the wealthier classes and the pioneering spirit lingered on. On the other hand a ten fold increase in the number of motor vehicles in the State saw a widening of the motor owning class. The number of commercial motor vehicles increased with automobiles gaining a regular role in road transport services. The motor trade expanded to meet the growing demand for vehicles and services while wartime restrictions on the importation of motor bodies boosted the local body building industry. An ominous development, from the local trade's point of view, was the increasing influence of American manufacturers. Meanwhile the larger vehicle population forced the authorities to explore further their responsibilities in traffic control. The Holman Government added a new dimension to the relationship between motorists and the state government by imposing a revenue raising motor tax in 1916.

In 1913 the Daily telegraph remarked that people who would not have considered purchasing a brougham and pair or even a buggy seemed willing to spend three or even five times as much to acquire a motor vehicle. 'Whether the rapid and inevitable vulgarisation of the motor car now going on will affect this peculiar craze has to be seen.'

1. Daily telegraph, 2 January 1913, p. 6.
the Telegraph speculated. Clearly the 'peculiar craze' did not wane as the number of motor vehicles in New South Wales increased from 2,351 in 1910 to 23,103 in 1919. Concurrently the number of motor vehicle drivers increased from 3,171 to 41,349, the number of motor cycles from 2,023 to 10,236 and the number of motor cycle riders from 2,300 to 15,063 (see Table 6). The United States experienced a more spectacular increase in the number of motor vehicles with a seventeen fold increase from 468,500 in 1910 to 7,576,888 in 1919. Nevertheless the New South Wales increase was a significant one.

While official statistics record the number of motor vehicles in the State less is known of their distribution. However Holderness motorists guide\(^3\) for 1916 listed the addresses of all registered motor owners in New South Wales. A 10% sample of car owners was taken and all the addresses which could be readily placed in the statistical divisions used by the State Statistician in 1970 were plotted (figure 1).\(^4\) The final sample totalled 1,148 or 9.7% of registered vehicles. As the number of trucks was much smaller all addresses were checked and 928 plotted.

The distribution of motor cars was similar to the distribution of population. The Sydney metropolitan area, with 41.2% of the State's population in 1916 had 44.95%
Table 6*

Motor vehicles in New South Wales 1910-1919

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Motor Vehicles</th>
<th>Drivers</th>
<th>Motor cycles</th>
<th>Riders</th>
<th>Lorries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2,351</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>2,023</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3,975</td>
<td>5,517</td>
<td>2,788</td>
<td>3,323</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>5,944</td>
<td>8,834</td>
<td>3,804</td>
<td>4,596</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>8,072</td>
<td>12,154</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>6,088</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>10,590</td>
<td>16,078</td>
<td>6,369</td>
<td>8,095</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>12,095</td>
<td>18,800</td>
<td>6,401</td>
<td>6,602**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>14,175***</td>
<td>22,598</td>
<td>7,070</td>
<td>9,444</td>
<td>845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>17,508</td>
<td>27,958</td>
<td>8,087</td>
<td>10,967</td>
<td>1,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>19,791</td>
<td>32,678</td>
<td>8,755</td>
<td>12,280</td>
<td>1,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>23,103</td>
<td>41,349</td>
<td>10,236</td>
<td>15,063</td>
<td>2,094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Until 1916 lorries were included in the total of motor vehicles.

**In 1915 a motor cycle rider's licence fee was introduced. Although the fee was only 2/6 it apparently provoked a great deal of consumer resistance.

*Table compiled from N.S.W. Police Deaprtment Annual Reports 1910 - 1919.
of the cars in the sample. 27.47% of the cars in the metropolitan area were registered from city addresses.
Cars were most numerous in Marrickville (17), Darling Point (12), Randwick (11), Newtown, North Sydney and Petersham (10), Ashfield, Bondi, Drummoyne and Stanmore (9), and Double Bay, Glebe, Mosman, Neutral Bay and Waverley (8).
The appearance of Drummoyne and the Eastern Suburbs among the car owning centres is not surprising since they possessed affluent residents who were able to purchase cars to overcome the relatively poor public transport services in their areas. Other suburbs such as Marrickville, Newtown, Petersham and Stanmore made a significant showing in the sample. Some of the cars in these suburbs were from the affluent sectors of the suburbs and some belonged to local businesses.

Outside the metropolitan area the second most populous city, Newcastle, had the most cars with 2.79% of the sample. Other towns with significant numbers of cars were Lismore (15), Broken Hill and Goulburn (13), Armidale, Balranald, Baraba and Maitland (11), Forbes, Grenfell and Young (10), and Glen Innes, Inverell, Tamworth and Wollongong (9). Of the regions shown in Figure 1, the Northern Region with 10.71% of the sample came second to the metropolitan region. At the time the Northern Region was gaining in population and prosperity '... owing to the continuous development of agriculture and the permanence of the mining interest.'

5. New South Wales Yearbook 1917, Sydney, 1918, p. 70.
### Figure 1: Distribution of Motor Vehicles in New South Wales in 1916

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical Divisions</th>
<th>% of sample</th>
<th>% of sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cars</td>
<td>Trucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sydney</td>
<td>44.95</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Outer Sydney</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hunter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Newcastle</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Balance</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Illawarra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Wollongong</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Balance</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. North Coast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Richmond-Tweed</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Clarence</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Hastings</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Northern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Northern Tablelands</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Northern Slopes</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) North Central Plain</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. North-Western</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Central Macquarie</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Macquarie Barwon</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Upper Darling</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, while the area was well served by rail services to Sydney, inter-regional transport was less developed. For example, although Tamworth, Armidale and Glen Innes were connected by rail they had no direct link with Inverell (Figure 2).

The truck sample was strikingly dissimilar to the car sample. 71% of the trucks in the sample were in the metropolitan area with 55.5% registered from city addresses. The suburbs with most trucks were Redfern (34), Glebe (16), Paddington and Stanmore (12), Annandale (11), Homebush (10), Leichhardt, Surry Hills and Waterloo (9) and Marrickville and North Sydney (8). Industrial suburbs such as Redfern dominated the sample and few trucks were registered in the well to do suburbs. The dominance of the metropolitan area suggests that business, commerce and public authorities were quicker than were agricultural interests to exploit motor trucks.

Outside Sydney the centres with most trucks were Newcastle (22), Broken Hill and Lismore (13), Wilcannia (11) and Casino (9). Of the regions Richmond-Tweed with 3.45% of the sample and the Far West with 3.02% were the most prominent. Richmond-Tweed farmers no doubt found the truck useful for transporting perishable dairy produce to market. In the Far West trucks would have been useful in mining and for general transport in an area ill served by rail. In addition trucks and cars were adopted for outback mail runs with Hunter Bros. beginning a service
NEW SOUTH WALES

Railways in 1916

Lines in use
Under construction
between Balranald and Swan Hill on 23 December 1909.\footnote{Riverina recorder, 5 January 1910, p. 3.}

The increasing popularity of cheaper American cars resulted in a widening of the motor owning class between 1910 and 1919. In 1910 when 2,100 cars were registered in New South Wales, 872 were of British manufacture, 572 of French manufacture and 402 were of American origin.\footnote{Daily telegraph, 23 November 1910, p. 17.} Apparently the wealthy maintained their preference for British and European cars because in 1916 the most prominent makes among the 70 cars registered from Darling Point addresses were Minerva (8), Renault (7), Rolls Royce (6), Daimler, Talbot and Wolsey (4), and Austin, Pierce Arrow and Hupmobile (3). Only two Fords could call Darling Point home. However in the State as a whole over 40% of registered vehicles were of American manufacture. Ford (2,450), Overland (763), Buick (534) and Hupmobile (435) held market leadership from Renault (383). Despite tariffs favouring British manufacturers American cars were competitively priced. In 1916 Fiats cost £795, Talbots £550 and £600, Overlands £325, Buicks £380 and £390, Hupmobiles £425 and Fords about £200.

American manufacturers tightened their hold on the Australian market during World War I when British and European cars were virtually unobtainable. The prejudice
against American cars died as it was demonstrated that their powerful engines and high ground clearances were positive attributes under Australian conditions. In 1919 Major A.E. Goddard, a visiting representative of the British motor trade, was informed at a representative gathering of Victorian and New South Wales traders that Australians preferred a light, powerful car and regarded British models as somewhat heavy, under-powered and overly expensive.8

Second hand cars were also available to the poorer would-be motorist. In 1919 A.V. Turner and Co. advertised such bargains as a 1914 Buick for £200, an F.N. single seater for £175 and an Overland five seater for £100.9

Motor cycles represented a cheaper form of transport. In 1910 it was reported that they were being widely used by the clergy.10 However the ratio of motor cycles to cars in New South Wales declined from 1:1 in 1910 to 1:2 in 1919. 1:2 was a high ratio by North American standards because in 1921 the United States had 12,357,376 cars and trucks and only 210,000 motor cycles while Canada had 509,670 cars and trucks and 9,713 cycles. By contrast the United Kingdom had 498,271 cars and trucks and 335,796 motor cycles.11 If the motor cycle was the 'people's motor

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10. Ibid., 20 August 1910, p. 11.
vehicle' in the United Kingdom the car appears to have filled this role in the United States and Canada. The New South Wales experience seems to lie between the two extremes.

Motor cyclists attracted some unfavourable comment. In 1913 the Chief Secretary, J.H. Cann, noted that '... the careless use and excessive speed of motor cycles is a scandal.' The practice of carrying passengers on cycles not fitted with pillion seats was also condemned. It was bad enough when a male passenger rode astride the cycle but

... the practice of carrying a lady sitting sideways, her legs dangling in the air, her skirts flapping about the back wheel, her arms in a stranglehold round the drivers neck, is not only a deplorable picture but a decidedly dangerous method of passenger carrying.

Women drivers became more numerous during the period 1910-1919 with the number increasing from 320 in 1913 to 3,000 in 1918. However the percentage of women drivers only increased from 2.6% in 1913 to 9.1% in 1918. Nevertheless women could claim some notable achievements. In 1913 Miss H. Monk competed in a Sydney-Melbourne reliability trial sponsored by the A.C.A. and the Victorian Automobile

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12. Undated note by Chief Secretary on report of Automobile Club of Australia deputation to Lord Mayor of Sydney, N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department correspondence received 1913, A.O.40978.
15. Australian motorist, 1 August 1918, p. 974.
Club. Only Club members could compete and the A.C.A. still excluded women from membership but the resourceful Miss Monk joined the Victorian Club and competed as a member of that body. More spectacular was the feat of an 18 years old Melbourne woman, Jean Faulconer, who, in 1914, became the first woman to ride a motor cycle from Melbourne to Sydney. Prior to this Miss Faulconer had accepted a challenge to ride in the 'Globe of Death' at Melbourne's Luna Park. The promoters were sufficiently impressed to offer Miss Faulconer £15 per week to give regular performances but she declined for unspecified reasons.

Women began exploring employment prospects in the motor transport industry during the War years. In 1915 Miss Helena Burford enquired whether the police would licence women taxi-drivers. The Traffic Superintendent, Alfred Edward, reported that licencing women as taxi-drivers would be

... very undesirable in the public interest .... In as small a matter as replacing a tyre they would be much handicapped and in engine trouble they would be helpless.

A further enquiry from Miss Burford induced the Inspector General to endorse Edward's report adding that

16. Ibid., 1 April 1913, p. 961.
18. Australian motorist, March 1914, p. 768.
19. Traffic Superintendent to Inspector General of Police, 14 April 1915. N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department, correspondence received A.O.38295.
Miss J. Faulconer, the only Lady Motorcyclist who has travelled overland from Melbourne to Sydney.
A serious objection would also be the fact that a woman might be liable to annoyance or molestation when driving her car in remote suburbs at night.\(^{20}\)

At this point the matter came to the attention of the Chief Secretary, George Black, who noted that women had been licenced in England and Europe and directed that 'If Helena is a capable and respectable woman licence her!'.\(^{21}\)

The Chauffer and Taxi Drivers Union did not share Black's enthusiasm claiming that there were sufficient male drivers in Sydney, that the Union was committed to securing taxi licences for returned service men and that the 'calling would be degrading' to the female sex\(^{22}\). Despite the Union's objections Miss Burford was advised that she could apply for a licence and the Traffic Branch was instructed to consider her application on its merits. Nothing more is known of the matter as the final note on the Chief Secretary's file indicates that Miss Burford had not replied to the Department's letter\(^{23}\).

Women bus conductors appeared in Sydney on 18 September 1918 when 3 out of 5 applicants were licenced\(^{24}\). The innovation was not universally applauded with the Daily telegraph commenting that

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20. Inspector General of Police to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 6 April 1916, ibid.
22. Chauffers and Taxi Drivers Union to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 7 June 1916, ibid.
It is in accordance with the spirit of the times for women to leave domestic duties and compete with men for 'tram drivers' and 'bus conductors' billets, but it can hardly be for the good of the race."

The widening of the motoring class was also evident in the emergence of the owner driver as a conspicuous figure. The pioneer motorist was fascinated by the motor vehicle but often employed a chauffer to drive and maintain his vehicles. The owner driver did his own driving and tended to see the motor vehicle as a routine means of transport. Servicing and maintenance were left to garages. It is not possible to say when owner drivers became a majority among motorists but they became increasingly significant between 1910 and 1919.

Motor sport became more specialised and professional between 1910 and 1919. The A.C.A. continued to organise sporting events for members but inter-city record breaking became the most publicised motor sporting event. Many of the record breakers had strong trade connections. Boyd Edkins, for example, used his company's prestige vehicle, the Prince Henry Vauxhall, in assaults on the Sydney-Brisbane and Melbourne-Sydney records. Perhaps the high point of inter-city record breaking was attained in 1918 when, for the first time, a car travelled between Melbourne and Sydney in less time than that taken by the train.

25. Ibid.
Faster than a speeding locomotive! Boyd Edkins, first to drive from Melbourne to Sydney in less time than the train. Edkins 16 hours 55 minutes; the train 17 hours 5 minutes.
Although the public admired the record breakers, comment in official circles was unflattering. On 3 July 1913 a deputation from the Shires Association complained to the Minister for Works that record breakers were destroying small culverts and bridges. The complaint was referred to the Traffic Superintendent who reported that

"The cars are ... driven at a furious pace and in addition to injury to the roadways they are a source of great public danger."  

The Superintendent explained that the record breakers were difficult to apprehend because they did not give notice of their attempts and travelled late at night or early in the morning. Nevertheless he recommended that the police be instructed to report all record attempts and that it be made public that record breakers would be severely dealt with.

While the character of the motoring class changed between 1910 and 1919 it was made clear during World War I that its attitudes remained upper and middle class. It must be said that the War was not a happy time for motorists. With British and European factories switching to war production and shipping lanes menaced there was constant fear that vehicles, parts and petroleum supplies would become unobtainable. In addition motorists were criticised

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26. Report of Shires Association Deputation to Minister for Works, 3 July 1913, referred to Chief Secretary, N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department, correspondence received A.O.28368.

27. Traffic Superintendent to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 20 August 1913, ibid.
in some circles for wasting resources and exhibiting callous indifference to the suffering of Australia's fighting men by persisting with their sport. Such charges inspired the Federal Council of the Motor Traders Association to take a census of all cars purchased during the first quarter of 1916 and it was claimed that only 5% had been purchased solely for pleasure purposes.28

Nevertheless in August 1917 W.M. Hughes announced a luxury ban prohibiting the importation of non-essential items. Alcohol, biscuits, confectionary, fur apparel, perfume, jewellery and motor vehicle bodies were among the items defined as luxuries. Hughes stated that the ban was designed to keep Australia's wealth within the nation and the Empire, to make money which was being squandered available for loans and other purposes, to encourage Australian industries and increase employment opportunities.29

None of the criticism impaired motorists' loyalty or support for the war effort. An A.C.A. 1,000 mile reliability trial, scheduled for 7-12 September 1914, was postponed. 'If Germany has been taught the lesson all Britishers hope, and the war is over by then it will take place in November.'30 If the War continued beyond November the trial would be held in September 1915. However at the

30. Australian motorist, September 1914, p. 65.
end of 1914 the Club resolved to abandon all competitions for the duration of the War. The Australian motorist objected that

... other sporting organisations do their bit for the Empire and keep their competitions going at the same time. If the whole of the sporting organisations here adopted the attitude of the A.C.A. Sydney would soon be known as the 'Dead City'.

The journal also feared that the Club's policy would depress the motor trade. However the A.C.A. maintained its attitude. In November 1914 members belonging by birth or nationality to any country at war with Britain were asked to refrain from visiting the Club for the duration of the War. Members were also requested not to invite citizens of hostile nations to the Club.

Prominent A.C.A. members favoured enlistment in the armed forces. Before the end of 1914 the Club's President, Colonel J.M. Arnott, had taken command of the 7th Australian Light Horse, Colonel W.R. Watson was commanding the infantry in the New Guinea Expeditionary Force, and Captain Oswald Watt was serving with the Air Force in France. In 1915 a 'Roll of Honour' was established to record the names of Club members who had served at the front and by the end of the War the roll contained 40 names. The A.C.A. did not

31. Ibid., 1 March 1915, p. 635.
32. Daily telegraph, 24 November 1914, p. 3.
participate directly in the conscription campaigns. However Club members W. Vicars and Samuel Hordern served as Vice-Presidents of the New South Wales branch of the Universal Service League while G.S. Beeby, Edmund Geech and A.L. Mullins were members of the General Committee\(^{34}\). The Club did promote voluntary enlistment and in 1918, when enthusiasm for the War had generally waned, William Epps was appointed A.C.A. delegate to the Sportsmen's Recruiting Committee.

Motorists were active on the home front. At the beginning of the War the Volunteer Automobile Corps established a car service for military headquarters staff. The service operated from the A.C.A. Clubhouse with Club staff performing the secretarial duties\(^{35}\). The Motor Traders Association, which had been formed in 1911, resolved:

> That this association desires to express its unswerving loyalty to the British Empire during the present crisis, and places at the disposal of the Minister for Defence all the resources of the association, so that he may obtain the fullest information with regard to motor transport, etc.\(^{36}\)

In August 1914 a car and driver were made available to the military authorities. The service operated daily for 2½ months until no longer required by the military\(^{37}\).

\(^{34}\) Sydney morning herald, 11 September 1915, p. 10.

\(^{35}\) Motor in Australia, November 1915, p. 10.

\(^{36}\) Australian motorist, September 1914, p. 67.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., December 1914, p. 343.
Private motorists assisted by driving wounded soldiers from the troop ships to hospital and taking convalescing soldiers for outings. When the first batch of wounded soldiers was expected, in July 1915, the A.C.A. requested members to make their cars available to transport the soldiers to hospital promising that neither infectious nor stretcher cases would be carried in the cars\(^{38}\). Sixty-five cars were made available on that occasion. Later there was criticism of the infrequency with which A.C.A. members made their cars available. In October 1915 the Red Cross took charge of transport arrangements for wounded soldiers. However when, in November 1915, a group of wounded soldiers was left waiting on their ship for \(1\frac{1}{2}\) days the A.C.A. was blamed. In the Legislative Assembly T.H. Thrower asked whether it was true that the soldiers had been left waiting because A.C.A. members had been too busy enjoying themselves at the races. The *Motor in Australia* reported indignantly that the fault lay with the War Office which had failed to notify the Red Cross of the ship's arrival\(^{39}\). Such incidents brought a sour note to the A.C.A.'s war effort.

Motorists supported the various war appeals. The A.C.A. arranged for cars to participate in a patriotic collection held on 3 September 1914 and in the Patriotic Procession and Carnival held at the Show Grounds on 7 September 1914\(^{40}\).

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38. Ibid., August 1914, p. 343.


On Belgian Day, 14 March 1914, 40 or 50 cars joined the procession and collected about £500\textsuperscript{41}. In addition individual A.C.A. members donated £250 to the fund\textsuperscript{42}. During 1915 the A.C.A. as a body contributed over £400 to patriotic causes\textsuperscript{43}. As well as money some motor vehicles were donated to the war effort. In 1914 the War Office commandeered all motor vehicles in Britain and the Red Cross appealed to its New South Wales Branch to send replacement vehicles. Aided by a £100 donation from the A.C.A. the New South Wales Branch was able to despatch its first vehicle in January 1915\textsuperscript{44}. Individual motorists including R.S. Gillett, H.J. Preston, F.A. Winchcombe and K.E. Winchcombe also donated vehicles to the Red Cross and the military\textsuperscript{45}.

The attitude and patriotism of motorists was exhibited during the great strike of 1917. The strike began in the New South Wales Railways and Tramways Department on 2 August 1917 and spread rapidly in the food, fuel and transport industries. It lasted for 82 days and involved 76,000 workers or 14\% of employees in New South Wales\textsuperscript{46}.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 1914/15, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Australian motorist, 1 October 1915, p. 313.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 1 February 1915, p. 547.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 1 October 1915, p. 313.
Pro War idealists regarded the strike as a further manifestation of the disloyalty displayed in the defeat of the conscription referenda while non-labor opinion feared that it heralded a repetition of the Russian Revolution in Australia.\textsuperscript{47} Motorists quickly demonstrated their opposition to the strike with the A.C.A. assisting the Chamber of Commerce to arrange a fleet of private cars to transport officials and generally assist the government.\textsuperscript{48} The Motor Traders Association also rallied to the cause assuring the government '... of its loyalty, practical support of their present determined attitude in the industrial trouble now existing.'\textsuperscript{49} The M.T.A. also offered to provide cars for official purposes.

The Government appreciated the potential of motor transport and when the Trolley and Draymen's Union blacklisted Sydney's wharves an emergency transport committee was formed with power to organise the city's transport and requisition motor lorries and horse drawn vehicles.\textsuperscript{50} The members of the committee were F.I. Cridland, James McMahon, A.E. Rudder (Master Carriers Association), Boyd Edkins (M.T.A. President) and Alick McNeil. Fearing that any attempt to use horse transport immediately would widen the strike the committee organised a fleet of 75 motor lorries, driven by volunteers, to transport goods from the

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 52.
\textsuperscript{48} *Australian motorist*, September 1917, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., October 1917, p. 156.
wharves. On the fifth morning of the strike the Master Carriers, aided by their sons and clerks, arrived at the wharves with 200 horse teams and from that time the horses gradually replaced the lorries. The Australian motorist reported that 'All agreed that had the motors not been used a great congestion would have taken place and the strikers would have had the whip hand.'\footnote{1} Overall there was little confrontation between the motor drivers and the strikers but Alick McNeil claimed that when conflict occurred 'the lorry men came out on the right side.'\footnote{2}

It is interesting to note that motor lorries were also used to break the British General Strike of 1926 and in each case their success reinforced the enthusiast's view that motor transport could assume the roles previously played by the horse, the tram and the train.

\begin{quotation}
The A.C.A. remained the major motorists' organisation between 1910 and 1919. In 1914 the Club purchased its own premises at 132 Phillip Street where it was able to open from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m. on 6 days each week. Facilities included a billiard room, a reading and writing room, a lounge room and dressing and bath rooms\footnote{3}. The acquisition of 134 Phillip Street enabled the A.C.A. to become a residential Club. Other services were introduced with a legal defence fund to assist members to defend themselves.
\end{quotation}

\footnote{1}{Ibid., p. 155.}

\footnote{2}{Ibid.}

\footnote{3}{Motor in Australia, October 1914, p. 8.}
The Automobile Club of Australia House, Phillip Street, Sydney

Motor in Australia
September 1915, p. 36

The Automobile Club of Australia's Phillip Street club house.
in traffic cases being established in 1910\textsuperscript{54}. In 1917 a club solicitor was appointed to conduct defences in traffic cases\textsuperscript{55}. 1911 saw the creation of a Technical Committee which studied mechanical developments and from which members could request advice on mechanical matters and the fairness of repair bills.

In 1911 the A.C.A. arranged a special vehicle insurance policy for its members through Lloyds of London\textsuperscript{56}. Local insurers were highly suspicious of motor business and although they adopted British premium rates they offered a much more restricted cover. Comprehensive cover was available in Britain but Australian policies often restricted claims to £50 per accident and £100 per year. British third party policies offered unlimited cover whereas Australian policies, with premiums of 70\% to 95\% of the British rate, limited claims to £150 per accident and £300 per year\textsuperscript{57}. Thus the Lloyd's policies offered considerable advantages to A.C.A. members.

The A.C.A. continued to defend the interests of its members. On 3 May 1910 a Motor Drivers Association was formed as a club for professional drivers and their

\textsuperscript{54} Daily telegraph, 2 July 1910, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{55} Motor in Australia, January 1918, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{56} Automobile Club of Australia Yearbook, 1918-19, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{57} The review: an Australasian journal of banking, insurance and finance, 29 February 1908, p. 81.
employers. The Association was strictly non-union in character and operated as an employment agency for chauffeurs. The Association was granted affiliation with the A.C.A. and a number of chauffeurs were employed as a result of this connection. However the Association disintegrated during 1912 due to lack of support from chauffers. The A.C.A. gained representation on the Chauffers Wages Board which was formed in 1913. The Board accepted the A.C.A.'s view that chauffers in private employment should be regarded as domestic servants and be excluded from the Board's awards. The Government carried a resolution through the Legislative Assembly reversing the ruling on privately employed chauffers. However, as the A.C.A. recorded:

... upon this resolution being submitted to the Legislative Council, a broader and sounder view of the matter was taken, and the upper house refused to confirm the action of the Legislative Assembly.

No doubt the well to do motorists appreciated the A.C.A.'s efforts but the increasing number of owner drivers presumably had little interest in the matter.

The A.C.A.'s stand on matters of more general motoring interest such as roads and motor taxation, which will be described later, show that the Club was not merely an upper class coterie. However the A.C.A. made little effort to widen its membership. In 1911 the Club had 334 members,

59. Automobile Club of Australia Annual report, 1915/16, p. 11.
representing 1 licenced driver in 16, but the 700 members of 1919 represented only 1 licenced driver in 60. Moves to broaden the membership were rejected. In 1913 Fred Walsh suggested that ladies who were relatives of members or owners of pleasure cars should be admitted as lady members with all the privileges of membership other than those attached to the Club House and the government of the Club. The Automobile Club of Victoria had admitted lady members in 1909 denying them the use of the club rooms until 'more suitable premises' could be obtained. The A.C.A. proved more conservative and the committee rejected Walsh's suggestion. In August 1917 P.A. Oatley's suggestion that 'associate membership' should be established '... with the object of gaining the direct support of a majority of motor car owners throughout the state of N.S.W.' was referred to a sub-committee. When the sub-committee reported the general committee decided that it was an inopportune time to introduce associate membership and discussion was adjourned sine die. The proposal was revived in 1919 but again deferred. Perhaps the majority of the committee correctly assessed the mood of motorists for while the A.C.A. survived attempts to establish more democratic motorists' organisations failed.

In 1911 an Englishman, Charles Haffenden Dodd, a Vice Chairman of the Automobile Association and Motor Union,

60. Daily telegraph, 2 July 1913, p. 16.
visited Australia. Dodd noted the lack of combination among New South Wales motorists and commented that only 300 of the State's 3,000 motorists belonged to the A.C.A. He described the Club as '... an excellent body in its way but not nearly democratic enough to grow to anything like powerful proportions.'\textsuperscript{63} In July 1911 Dodd announced the formation of the Australian Automobile Association which would function to protect motorists, work for better roads and encourage cooperation between British and Australian motorists. Dodd also proposed to establish branches in other states when he visited them. J.F. Rose-Soley was appointed organising secretary, offices were opened in Ocean House and by February 1912 membership exceeded 200.\textsuperscript{64} The Association made a promising beginning and in 1911 gained the privilege of examining applications from local councils to the Police for the establishment of special speed limits. However the Association soon lost momentum and apparently failed to survive beyond 1912.

Apparently no leader emerged within the A.A.A. once Dodd had returned to England. In addition the Association may not have been entirely convincing as a motorists' protection society. One journal reported that Dodd's main purpose in visiting Australia was to establish a branch of the Motor Union Insurance Company.\textsuperscript{65} Certainly in 1912

\textsuperscript{63} Motor in Australia, August 1911, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{64} Australian motorist, February 1912, p. 587.
\textsuperscript{65} The review, 30 September 1912, p. 400.
Herbert Filmer concurrently held the positions of A.A.A. Secretary and Australian Secretary-Manager of the Motor Union Insurance Company. Earlier Rose-Soley combined the position of Secretary of the A.A.A. with that of Secretary of the Motor Traders Association. Motorists may have viewed such trade connections with suspicion. While these associations may have been exploited to gain concessions for motorists the A.A.A. had first to prove itself as a dynamic motorists' organisation.

A new organisation emerged in 1917. On 21 October 1914 the Premier W.A. Holman had announced in his budget speech that revenue lost as a result of the War would have to be made up from new imposts. One of the new measures was a motor tax which would be levied for the duration of the War. Motorists protested but consoled themselves by viewing the tax as a contribution to the War effort. In August 1917 a rumour circulated that the motor tax was about to be doubled. The Motor Traders Association immediately sponsored a protest movement which resulted in the formation of the Motorists Defence League. The League adopted the slogan 'no class taxation'. The A.C.A. decided to cooperate with the League. By October 1918 the League was claiming a membership of 4,000 and a special meeting in November 1918 resolved that the League should become a permanent body with the title of the Motorists Association of New South Wales.

66. Ibid.


68. Daily telegraph, 5 October 1918, p. 3.
The new body made an aggressive showing and in September 1918 a deputation astonished the Minister for Local Government by advising him that a doubling of the motor tax could result in no cars running in the Nationalist interest at the next election\textsuperscript{69}. Even so members lost interest once the threat of increased motor taxes faded. Apparently motorists could rally to support a personality such as Dodd or an anti-tax campaign but felt no need for a permanent democratic motorists' organisation.

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\end{center}

Commercial motor transport developed steadily between 1910 and 1919 although animal transport remained extremely important. In 1912 it was reported that bullock teams were working in many country areas and playing a major role in opening up new areas on the North Coast\textsuperscript{70}. Horses were also widely used with the number in the State increasing from 650,636 in 1910 to 742,477 in 1918. In 1919 the number of horses declined to 722,723 due to drought conditions\textsuperscript{71}.

The number of motor trucks in New South Wales increased from 845 in 1916, the first year in which separate statistics of motor trucks were recorded, to 2,094 in 1919 (see Table 6). Trucks were adopted more quickly in the city than in the country. In 1910 the Flemington Brick and Tile Works

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 7 September 1918, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{70} Coach and motor body builder for Australia and New Zealand, 15 February 1912, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{71} Official yearbook of New South Wales, 1920, p. 434.
\end{flushright}
commissioned ten 5 ton lorries\textsuperscript{72}. In 1913 the brewers Tooth and Co. announced that they would replace their 300 horse drawn vehicles with 30 trucks\textsuperscript{73}. Horderns were already using 12 motor lorries\textsuperscript{74}. However horses remained significant in the carrying trade. Between 1911 and 1919 the number of motor vans in Sydney increased from 3 to 131 while the number of horse vans increased from 1,247 in 1910 to 1,615 in 1914 with 1,536 still operating in 1919 (Table 7).

Motor vehicles were also utilized in the public sector. It was reported in 1910 that the Post Office had decided to adopt motor vans for letter box clearances\textsuperscript{75}. In 1911 the Railway Commissioners fitted a lorry with a tower for use in repairing overhead lines\textsuperscript{76}. In April 1911 Sydney City Council took delivery of a truck with interchangeable bodies which could be used for street watering or carting road metal. A five ton garbage truck was expected to arrive before the end of the month\textsuperscript{77}. Australia's first motorised 'black maria' was commissioned by the New South Wales Police Force in 1914\textsuperscript{78}. In 1916 Education Department Medical Officers were reported to be travelling

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 25 July 1910, p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{73} \textit{Australian motorist}, January 1913, p. 549.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Ibid., April 1913, p. 962.
\item \textsuperscript{75} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 23 July 1910, p. 18.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 4 March 1911, p. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 7 April 1911, p. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{Australian motorist}, May 1914, p. 1013.
\end{itemize}
**TABLE 7**

*Vehicles registered under the Metropolitan Traffic Act 1910 - 1919*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Horse Van</th>
<th>Motor Van</th>
<th>Horse Cab</th>
<th>Motor Taxi</th>
<th>Horse Bus</th>
<th>Motor Bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,247</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1,468</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1,604</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>1,615</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>1,507</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>1,442</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1,457</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>1,470</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1,536</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Compiled from N.S.W. Police Department Reports 1910 - 1919*
from school to school by motor car. A number of other public bodies, including the Water and Sewerage Board, the Public Works Department and the Sydney Harbour Trust adopted motor lorries. The Government Printing Office employed light delivery vans.

Motor passenger services developed between 1910 and 1919 although bus services were not encouraged in Sydney. In 1912 the Railway Commissioners stated:

> It is now quite impossible, with any system of surface trams in connection with which the size of unit and the speed in narrow thoroughfares are necessarily limited, to cope satisfactorily with the loading which has to be dealt with during the crush periods of the day in the business portions of the city.

The Commissioners saw the development of a comprehensive scheme of urban transport utilizing trams and underground railways as the solution. The Commissioners ignored the motor bus probably because of the existing congestion in Sydney's streets. In 1914 the Police rejected several applications for licences from private bus operators on the grounds of traffic congestion although some argued that the government was determined to forestall competition between buses and the trams. When, in 1918, further applications were rejected the authorities stated publicly that no additional buses would be licenced to ply in

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79. Daily telegraph, 8 April 1916, p. 15.
80. N.S.W. Railway Commissioners Report, 1912, p. 18.
George street from the G.P.O. looking towards Circular Quay. The Australian motorist claimed that this was a typical scene at peak hour with the long line of trams leaving no room for other traffic. The journal also drew attention to the ruts and puddles in the street.
competition with the trams. Despite the restrictions the number of motor buses in Sydney increased from 4 in 1910 to 148 in 1919. Concurrently the number of horse buses declined from 88 to 22 indicating that if buses were to operate in Sydney they would be motor buses.

Horse cabs proved more resilient than horse buses although their demise was predicted early. In 1910 the Chief Secretary, Donald MacDonnell, abolished separate ranks for horse and motor cabs ordering all cabs to take equal turns on single ranks. The Cabmens Union, supported by the Labor Council, protested but MacDonnell retained single ranks arguing that 'it was inevitable that horse cabs would ultimately be superseded by taxi-cabs.'

Certainly the number of motor cabs increased significantly from 100 in 1910 to 389 in 1919. On the other hand horse cabs, despite decreasing from 794 in 1910 to 666 in 1919, still outnumbered motor cabs in 1919.

Motor passenger services also developed in the country. In December 1910 the Monaro Motor Service Company of Cooma, established in 1909, sought permission from the Chief Secretary's Department to operate services between Bega and Cooma. The Company was advised that under existing regulations separate licences must be obtained from each council in whose

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82. *Daily telegraph*, 17 August 1918, p. 3.
83. Ibid., 7 January 1911, p. 22.
area the services would operate\textsuperscript{84}. The registration with councils was in addition to registration under the Motor Traffic Act. In 1911 the Traffic Superintendent and the Under Secretary for Local Government, J. Garlick, conferred and agreed that councils should be required to licence commercial vehicles under the numbers allotted to them by the motor registration authority\textsuperscript{85}. This ruling at least relieved motor service operators from the obligation to carry a number of registration plates or to change plates at local government boundaries.

The lack of traffic congestion outside the metropolitan area may have induced the government to be more tolerant towards country operators. In addition bus and car services filled some gaps in the State transport system thus easing the demand for extensions to the railway system. For example in 1918 a motor service was operating between Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads which were not joined by rail\textsuperscript{86}. Prior to 1919 motor services posed no threat to the rail services in country areas thus encouraging government tolerance.

\textsuperscript{84.} Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department to Monaro Motor Service Co., Cooma, 21 December 1910. N.S.W. Colonial Secretary special bundles 'Motor Traffic Act and Amendment 1905 - 1919'. A.O.5/5325.

\textsuperscript{85.} Undated report of meeting between Traffic Superintendent and Under Secretary, Local Government Department, ibid.

\textsuperscript{86.} Australian motorist, 1 November 1918, p. 83.
Horse coaches and ships suffered more from motor competition. In 1911 motor coach passengers paid 15/- for a three hour trip from Glenn Innes to Inverell. The mail coach charged only 12/6 but took eight hours to complete the journey. In 1918 bus passengers were paying £1-1-0 for a 5½ hour trip between Tenterfield and Casino whereas the coach fare was £1-15-0 and travelling time was 14½ hours. Prior to the introduction of the Monaro Motor Service Cooma had been serviced from Tathra by ships of the Illawarra Steam Ship Co. A horse coach linked Bega and Cooma. In 1913 the Monaro Motor Service was awarded the mail contract between Bega and the Cooma mail train. Thus motor services had had a perceptible if limited impact in country areas by 1919.

Attempts to establish a local motor manufacturing industry again failed between 1910 and 1919. As early as 1910 it had been argued that 'Now that the construction of the motor car has been fairly standardized, it is time that something is done as regards manufacturing complete cars in this country.' Between 1910 and 1913 Roy Sandford, a

87. Coach and motor body builder, 15 January 1911, p. 278.
88. Australian motorist, 1 November 1918, p. 84.
89. 'W.H. Balmain looks back' supplement to Bega district news, 29 May 1959.
90. Dunlop Rubber Company, Cycling and motoring notes, 22 October 1910, p. 3.
Sydney motor dealer, built one car known as the Sandford Special\(^91\). In 1917 the Roo Motor Company of Sydney announced that it would manufacture and market two seater roadsters at £195 but the project failed\(^92\). In September 1919 the first of the ill fated Australian Sixes was completed in Sydney\(^93\). The only successful local manufacturer was the Caldwell Vale Motor and Truck Company, established in 1911 which produced a number of trucks and tractors.

Body building and vehicle servicing enterprises expanded between 1910 and 1919. In 1915 74 metropolitan and 26 country establishments, employing 733 and 154 workers respectively, were engaged in the motor and cycle industry. By 1920 the number of metropolitan establishments had increased to 137, employing 1514 hands, and the number of country establishments had increased to 83 with 542 employees. Unfortunately official statistics do not differentiate between cycle and motor establishments so that the exact size of the motor sector is not known.

Motor body building profited from conditions created by World War I. Initially prospects appeared bleak as new British and European cars became virtually unobtainable. Vehicles were still being manufactured in North America but

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92. *Australian motorist*, 1 August 1917, p. 1279.
shipping space was scarce and freight rates rose from
between £1-8-0 and £1-12-6 per ton measure before the war to
£8-5-0 in 1916. In the longer term local body builders
and garages stood to profit from the situation as the aging
vehicles in use required greater maintenance.

The main boost to local body building came in August
1917 with the announcement of W.M. Hughes' luxury embargo.
Victorian body builders responded enthusiastically assuring
the Minister for Customs that they could meet local demand
for bodies. Car retailers dissented pointing out that
local body builders had produced only 1,100 bodies in 1916,
that local capacity was 2,600 and that 10,000 bodies had to
be imported in 1916. New South Wales body builders shared
the retailers reservations complaining of shortages of skilled
labour and materials and requesting that a complete set of
glass bonnets, body panels, mudguards, valenas, scuttle
dashes and instrument boards be admitted with each chassis.
The body builders and retailers quickly reached agreement
and a joint deputation advised the Minister for Customs that
local body builders would need at least 12 months tooling up
before they could meet local requirements. The motor trade
urged the government to admit one body with every two chassis
and this request was granted in 1918. Even so local body
builders were assured of sufficient work to ensure the

94. Motor in Australia, 4 April 1916, p. 5.
96. Ibid., 15 September 1917, p. 116.
98. Ibid., 15 September 1917, p. 115.
prosperity of their industry until the latter half of the 1920s.

The motor service industry expanded between 1910 and 1919. Sydney gained a number of elaborate garages, notably McNeill and McIntoshes garage at 20-26 Elizabeth Street opened in 1911. Facilities included showrooms, workshops and washing down areas and garage space for 30 cars with a locker for each owner to store parts and equipment. The appearance of petrol bowsers in 1914 was to revolutionise the vehicle service industry by ending the sale of petrol in tins. However the drive-way service station was an innovation of the 1920s. Service facilities also expanded in country areas. In 1912 it was reported that H. Vallender of Muswellbrook was operating a well fitted out workshop and handling both mechanical and body repairs.

The increasing strength of the motor trade was shown by the formation of the Motor Traders Association in 1911. In 1910 the Customs Department impounded a number of motor vehicles alleging that the importers had attempted to evade duties. A group of motor traders met to protest and decided to establish a permanent association. Consequently a motor


100. Dixon, Donald F. 'Origins of the Australian petrol distribution system'. In Australian economic history review, 1 March 1972, p. 43.

traders section was formed within the Chamber of Commerce. In November 1911 a new schedule of customs duties was announced including a 10% increase in rates. On 5 December 1911 motor traders attended a meeting in the A.C.A. Club Rooms. The A.C.A. played a part in calling the meeting but a spokesman explained that the Club's rules prevented it from associating itself with the movement and that it had merely allowed the meeting to be held in its rooms. A.C.A. members who were not motor traders retired behind screens in various parts of the room and played bridge or dominoes for the duration of the meeting.

The meeting resolved to send a deputation to the Minister for Customs and to form a separate Motor Traders Association. In the event the duties were withdrawn before the deputation could reach Melbourne and a meeting called for 21 December 1911 to receive the deputation's report failed to attract a quorum. A second meeting called for 22 February 1912 attracted the necessary attendance and the constitution of the Motor Traders Association was adopted. Membership of the Association was open to importers of motor vehicles, motor cycles and motor parts and leading body builders. The managers, secretaries, salesmen and foremen mechanics of member firms were eligible for associate membership.

3. Ibid., p. 489.
4. Ibid., March 1912, p. 703.
M.T.A. was to function not only as a trade association but also as a pressure group when members felt that their interests were threatened.

Between 1910 and 1919 the government became increasingly involved in the problem of motor traffic control. With the number of motor vehicles increasing steadily it is not surprising that the number of motor casualties in the metropolitan area increased from 2 killed and 95 injured in 1910 to 20 killed and 732 injured in 1919. Concurrently the number of offences against the Motor Traffic Act increased from 101 to 1,556. Demands for government action to reverse these trends were made repeatedly.

Some critics continued to condemn the behaviour of motorists. In 1916 J.C.L. Fitzpatrick alleged that cars were driven at a 'break-neck pace' in the city. In 1919 P. McGarry complained that '... the conduct of the motor car driver is shortening the lives of thousands of people in this city - particularly of nervous women.' Complaints were also heard in the suburbs and on 14 April 1914 Alderman Blue informed North Sydney Council that motor vehicles, sometimes four abreast, were speeding along Alfred Street and that unless steps were taken to protect the public 'perhaps some

5. N.S.W. Police Department Reports, 1910, p. 22, 1919, p. 16.  
shooting would be done.' The Police were aware of the dissatisfaction over traffic control. In 1912 the Inspector General of Police, commenting on a suggestion that the Traffic Superintendent should be sent on an overseas study tour, noted that many complaints about motor traffic had been received from the City and suburban councils and that '... leading citizens, particularly those who have been abroad, [state] that our traffic regulation is lacking in efficiency.'

The courts were also criticised for dealing too leniently with traffic offenders. One *Daily telegraph* correspondent claimed that a driver, facing furious driving charges for the fifteenth time, had been fined £3 in Newtown Court on a charge of running down an elderly man.

Local government bodies allowed their resentment of their loss of control over motor traffic to colour their views on traffic regulation. In 1913 Arthur Williamson, Town Clerk of Prospect and Sherwood, in requesting the Police to prosecute speeding motorists travelling on the Great Western Highway noted that:

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9. Inspector General of Police to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 6 September 1912, N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department correspondence received. A.O. ref 5/7188, no. 38925.

You can rest assured that my Council reluctantly asks you to carry out a duty upon you imposed by the Motor Traffic Act which itself took control of the roads from those answerable for their maintenance.\footnote{Town Clerk, Prospect and Sherwood to Inspector General of Police, undated letter N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department, Correspondence received 1913. A.O. ref 5/7235, no. 29092.}

Some councils, including Liverpool and the City Council, even requested that responsibility for traffic control be returned to them. This idea found little support in official circles. Commenting on the suggestion that the City Council should assume control over all traffic within a certain radius of Sydney Superintendent Edward wrote:

The City Council at one time had control of traffic and of public vehicles and attended to them so badly that Parliament transferred the powers relating to public vehicles to the Transit Commission.

... The subject became too large for the Commission and it was transferred to the Police. The control of pedestrian traffic was still left with the City Council, but they did not exercise their authority, and after repeated requests by the Council (Edward's italics) this power was transferred to the Police.

I am satisfied from my experience of various methods that the Police is the only capable authority to regulate and control traffic and public vehicles.\footnote{Traffic Superintendent to Inspector General of Police 28 October 1919, N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department correspondence received. A.O. ref. 5/8047, no. 37076.}

Both the Police and the traffic regulations were reinforced in the face of the increasing traffic problem. The Police Traffic Branch was increased from 90 officers, or 3.5% of the force, in 1910 to 116 officers, or 4.5% of the force, in 1919\footnote{N.S.W. Police Department Reports, 1910, p. 2, 1919, p. 16.}. In 1915 the clerical and accounting
functions of the Traffic Branch were handed over to civilian public servants thus freeing Police Officers for traffic duty. In 1917 classes were commenced to train every Police Sergeant in the metropolitan area in traffic control. As early as 1912 the Police had begun using a car to catch traffic offenders and in 1916 the Police Motor Cycle Squad was formed.

Although many complaints were heard concerning the speed at which motor vehicles were driven no new restrictions were imposed. In fact the regulation limiting the speed at which automobiles could be driven across intersections to 6 m.p.h. was repealed in 1916. The Police were prepared to seek advice on speed limits. The Traffic Superintendant received a number of A.C.A. deputations and in 1912 established the practice of allowing motorists' organisations to express their views on applications from local councils for special speed limit zones. The Police conscientiously enforced existing regulations but apparently saw no need for further restrictions.

More attention was paid to defining vehicle equipment. In 1914 a regulation was gazetted outlawing tail lights which

15. Ibid., 1917, p. 5.
16. Ibid., 1912, p. 18.
17. Ibid., 1916, p. 8.
could be lit or extinguished 'by any person whilst in or upon such vehicle.'\textsuperscript{19} It was claimed that the regulation was introduced because some motorists who were able to extinguish their tail lights from inside the car had, when involved in accidents at night, turned off their tail lights and, having rendered their number plates invisible, sped off\textsuperscript{20}. Even so motorists resented the regulation since it obliged them to leave their cars in all weather to turn their tail lights on and off. When the Harbour authorities ruled that lighted tail lights on vehicles carried on punts constituted a hazard to navigation and must be extinguished the regulation became even more unpopular. Nevertheless the regulation remained in force until 1939\textsuperscript{21}.

'Dazzling' headlights also caused concern. In 1917 a regulation was gazetted requiring that headlights be adjusted so as to project a beam no more than 3'6" above the ground at a distance of 75 feet\textsuperscript{22}. The Police waged periodic campaigns against faulty headlights but the problem persisted. Devices such as cut-outs, which greatly increased the noise made by vehicles, were also outlawed in 1917.

Traffic congestion became more serious as the number of vehicles increased. Sydney's first one way streets were

\textsuperscript{19} New South Wales Government Gazette, 1 July 1914, p. 3778.
\textsuperscript{20} Motor in Australia, August 1914, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{21} N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report 1938-1939, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{22} New South Wales Government Gazette, 23 November 1917, p. 6255.
defined in 1915\textsuperscript{23}. Traffic was obliged to travel northwards on Bligh and Castlereagh Streets between Hunter and Campbell Streets and southwards on Pitt Street between Campbell Street and Circular Quay. In addition King Street, between York and Macquarie Streets, was reserved for west bound traffic between 4.30 and 6.00 p.m. The innovation was criticised by the A.C.A. Secretary, H.C. Morgan, who claimed that it would inconvenience motorists and that shopkeepers feared loss of trade\textsuperscript{24}. Nevertheless one way streets had come to stay.

In 1915 it became an offence for motorists to pass on the near side of any tram stopped to pick up or let down passengers until the road was clear of all passengers\textsuperscript{25}. Both tram conductors and passengers had been endangered by the motorist's practice of passing stationary trams. H.C. Morgan did not accept the necessity of the regulation complaining that '... the progress of all vehicles ... is to be regulated by the trams, and, in effect, means handing over the control of the traffic to the tramway authorities.'\textsuperscript{26} Morgan was not defending the motorist's right to run down tram passengers but was expressing the typical motorist's attitude that the trams should give way to the more modern form of transport embodied in the motor vehicle.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[23] New South Wales Government Gazette, 17 March 1915, p. 1640.
\item[26] Motor in Australia, April 1915, p. 8.
\end{footnotes}
Pedestrians were not entirely blameless as far as Sydney's traffic problems were concerned. The Metropolitan Traffic Amendment Act of 1912 transferred control over pedestrian traffic from the City Council to the Police. However problems remained and in 1915 an A.C.A. deputation asked the Lord Mayor to institute an educational campaign for pedestrians. The deputation complained that loitering pedestrians, when asked to move on by the Police, simply moved from the footpath to the carriageway. Motorists could not persuade the loiterers to move off the road and '... generally when you blow your horn they are much annoyed and if they are not too well bred they use pretty strong language.' The Lord Mayor acknowledged the justice of the deputation's allegations and agreed to place the matter before the traffic authorities. Superintendent Edward agreed that the complaints were well founded. However Edward refused to take drastic action against pedestrians commenting that it was impossible to make people careful by law and that the Police were doing everything possible.

State involvement with motoring extended beyond traffic control. In 1912 the A.C.A. began campaigning for an amendment of the Crimes Act to make the theft of a motor vehicle a felony. Illegal use of a motor vehicle was an


28. Traffic Superintendent to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 25 March 1915. N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department, correspondence received. A.O. 40978.
offence under the Motor Traffic Act punishable by a maximum fine of £20. However, as motorists pointed out, illegal use of cattle could be punished by up to three years imprisonment under the Crimes Act. Motorists felt entitled to the same protection as livestock owners but the government declined to act. Equally unsuccessful was the 1917 campaign for the establishment of a separate traffic court.

The sale and storage of petroleum products also attracted official attention. An Inflammable Liquids Bill was introduced in 1914. The A.C.A. immediately joined the Motor Yacht Club in a deputation to the Assistant Treasurer H.C. Hoyle. The deputation protested against the provision allowing motorists to carry only three gallons of petrol, in addition to the contents of their fuel tanks, in their cars. It was also pointed out that limiting garages to storing 100 gallons of petrol was unwarranted because a number of garages were installing 600 gallon underground storage tanks. Hoyle apparently heeded some of the deputation's arguments. When the Inflammable Liquids Act was passed in 1916 it allowed the storage of up to 16 gallons of petrol on private premises in 4 gallon tins. Anyone wishing to store more than 16 gallons was required to apply for a licence. The Inflammable Liquids Act was not intended to restrict motoring but was a recognition of the need to regulate the storage of inflammable fuels especially in built up areas.

30. Australian motorist, September 1914, p. 65.
The Government's decision to impose a motor tax also brought it into closer contact with motorists. A motor tax was proposed in 1911 and immediately condemned in motoring circles as a class tax. Registration fees had been imposed under the Motor Traffic Act but were accepted because they were intended to cover the operating costs of the registration system. In his budget speech of 21 October 1914 the Premier, W.A. Holman, announced that his government was obliged to find new sources of finance to compensate for revenue lost as a result of the War. One source was a motor tax which would be imposed for the duration of the War. 31

An A.C.A. deputation waited on the Assistant Treasurer, H.C. Hoyle, on 6 November 1914 and protested against motorists being singled out for taxing while other road users paid nothing. Hoyle repeated Holman's claim that the Government had to find new sources of revenue and added that the tax would only repay the Government for services they were already providing for motorists. He also claimed that the use of the motor car was eroding railway revenue. Finally Hoyle asserted that the motor car had enabled people to transact four or five times as much business and that the consequent increase in income should be taxed 32.

Having gained little comfort from Hoyle the A.C.A. drew up a petition which H.D. Morton tabled in Parliament

32. Ibid., December 1914, p. 344.
on 12 November 1914. The petition argued that motor cars were being used in business and professions and that any legislation discouraging the use of motor vehicles would cause hardship for many employees. The petition stated that motorists were already taxed through customs duties and had not even received adequate roads in return. Finally it was argued that if a motor tax was imposed the only equitable basis would be the volumetric capacity of the cylinders of the engine and not the weight of the vehicle.\textsuperscript{33}

When introducing the Motor Tax Bill in December 1914 Hoyle rejected the claim that motor tax revenue should be earmarked for road construction and maintenance.\textsuperscript{34} Hoyle asserted that the motor tax was being imposed to offset a decline in general revenue. He added that motor vehicles, which were attracting freight and passengers away from the trains, were partly responsible for a decline in railway revenue. Furthermore, Hoyle argued, it was not unfair to expect motorists to make a contribution to the general revenue in return for the money already spent on road construction and maintenance.

The motor tax was based on the horse power of the car and ranged from £2 p.a. on cars up to 12 h.p. to £20 p.a. on cars of 60 h.p. or more. The tax was imposed for 12 months with provision for annual renewals for the duration

\textsuperscript{33} N.S.W. Parliament \textit{Debates}, 12 November 1914, Vol. 56, p. 1126.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 7 December 1914, p. 1746.
of the war. Parliament neglected to renew the tax in 1915 but the Police continued to collect it. It was reported that only 150 motorists out of 2,150 had refused to pay.\textsuperscript{35} The Government soon ratified the tax for 1915. In 1916 the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act imposed a permanent motor tax. This action was criticised as a breach of the original undertaking but motorists were reluctant to engage in political strife while the war continued.

The period 1910 to 1919 may seem somewhat colourless in comparison with the romance of the pioneer era or the developments of the 1920s. Nevertheless it was an important period of consolidation and transition. By 1919 motor transport had ceased to be a novelty and had secured a permanent, if limited, role in the economic and transport systems of New South Wales.

\textsuperscript{35} Australian motorist, October 1915, p. 135.
CHAPTER 3: ROADS

The advance of motor transport in New South Wales between 1900 and 1920 occurred despite the generally bad condition of the State's roads. The need for better roads was widely recognised and from 1909 successive governments attempted to carry main roads legislation. Local governments, which had been given control over roads by the Local Government Act of 1906, resisted a state government take over of road administration. Local governments enjoyed the power and patronage associated with road building and believed that the state government's cost sharing proposals were inadequate. The finance problem prevented the State government from simply overriding local objections. In 1918 the federal government made its first road grant to the States. Federal grants became an increasingly significant source of road finance and the administrative conditions imposed by the Commonwealth virtually forced New South Wales to establish its Main Roads Board in 1925. Interestingly the politicians who presided over the introduction of federal road aid were motorists. W.M. Hughes, whose driving 'was always a terror to all who saw it,'1 and Earle Page, who purchased his first car in 1904, regularly drove long distances. S.M. Bruce was the proud owner of a Rolls Royce.

During the 1890s demands for improved roads were heard in several countries. In the United States agitation for better roads developed partly as an offshoot of the agrarian unrest which had found expression in the Farmers Alliances and the Populist movement\(^2\). The railroads had been a major target of farm discontent and road transport was seen as an attractive alternative\(^3\). Road legislation was first enacted in New Jersey in 1891\(^4\). In 1892 the National League for Good Roads was formed and gained support from farmers, cyclists and later motorists\(^5\). Federal involvement in the road problem began in 1893 with the formation of the Office of Road Inquiry within the Department of Agriculture\(^6\). The Office functioned as an educational body and it was not until 1913 that Congress took the first major step in the formation of a national roads policy by voting $5,000,000 for the improvement of roads on which rural mail was carried\(^7\).

In 1916 the Federal Aid Roads Act allocated $75,000,000 for the improvement of rural roads. Initially the United

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 32.
5. Ibid., p. 31.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 36.
States' involvement in the World War forestalled the application of the Act but as war traffic brought the railroads to a standstill the need for a national highway system to supplement the railroads became more apparent. The machinery to establish a national highway system was created by the National Highways Act of 1921. Meanwhile the road question had arisen in Canada. The Highways Act of 1919 allocated $20,000,000 from federal consolidated revenue, over the succeeding five years, for the construction and reconstruction of national highways. Federal aid was to cover 40% of the cost of the works, which were to be carried out by the provinces, and the completed job was subject to Federal inspection.

In Britain cyclists began campaigning for improved roads during the 1890s. A Development and Road Improvement Bill was introduced in 1908 and a road board was established in 1910. Whereas road programmes in North America were financed from general revenue the British programme was financed from taxes levied upon motorists. A 3d. per gallon petrol tax imposed in the budget of 1909 financed the Road Improvement Fund. By 1915 the Fund, even after an extensive road sealing programme, had a surplus of £4,000,000.

8. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
9. Ibid., p. 38.
12. Ibid., p. 100.
The Government then 'borrowed' the surplus and in 1919 replaced the Board with a road department within the newly created Ministry of Transport.\textsuperscript{13}.

Agitation for improved roads began in Australia during the 1890s. The campaign was most successful in Victoria where the Country Roads Act of 1912 established a Country Roads Board to control main roads outside the metropolitan area.\textsuperscript{14} The Board was empowered to declare main roads but, unless otherwise authorised by the Governor, was obliged to have the work carried out by the local councils. The cost of construction and maintenance of main roads was met by the Treasury upon the Board's warrant but the Board could then apportion half the cost among the local councils which had benefitted from the work. In addition to contributions from councils the Board also received money voted by Parliament, fees and fines, minus the cost of collection, imposed by the Motor Car Act of 1915 and loan money. South Australia passed a Main Roads Act in 1913 which authorised the raising of loan money not exceeding £100,000 to be spent by the government Engineer of Roads and Bridges on reconstructing main roads and purchasing working quarries to provide road making material.\textsuperscript{15} However the Victorian Act was generally accepted as the more desirable model and provided the pattern for the Tasmanian Main Road

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 114.
\textsuperscript{14} N.S.W. Local Government Department \textit{Report}, 1922-23, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 62.
Maintenance Act of 1918\textsuperscript{16} and the Queensland Main Roads Act of 1920\textsuperscript{17}.

In New South Wales the government initially shared responsibility for road construction and maintenance with road trusts. The Main Roads Management Act of 1858 placed the Great Western, Great Southern and Great Northern Roads under the control of a Road Commissioner. Public roads, bridges and ferries not controlled by the Commissioner became the responsibility of local councils under the Municipalities Act of 1858\textsuperscript{18}. In 1859 the Public Works Department was established and in 1861 a separate road office was formed within the Department\textsuperscript{19}. Despite the expansion of government activity road trusts still controlled 4,000 of the state's 7,389 miles of road in 1870.

After 1855, when the Sydney-Parramatta railway opened, railway construction became the focus of attention. By 1875 roads were considered to be of secondary importance\textsuperscript{20}. However the Main Roads Management Act of 1871, which empowered the Public Works Department to proclaim main roads, initiated a major expansion in government road building activity. By 1906 the Public Works Department controlled 48,311 miles of road while trusts controlled

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 61.
\textsuperscript{18} The roadmakers: a history of main roads in New South Wales, Sydney, Main Roads Department, 1976, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 44.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 43.
\end{flushleft}
only 195 miles\textsuperscript{21}. The cost of the Department's work was met entirely by the State Treasury. In 1901 the road vote reached $1,783,200. The vote declined during the recession but still totalled $870,682 in 1904\textsuperscript{22}.

The Local Government Act of 1906 established local government in all areas of New South Wales outside the Western Division and made the councils responsible for the construction and maintenance of all roads within their areas. The state government was committed to allocate at least £150,000 per year for road works. The Minister for Local Government was empowered to proclaim main roads which the councils were required to maintain. The Public Works Department remained responsible for roads in the Western Division and for 256 bridges and ferries which had been proclaimed national works prior to 1906. Nevertheless the road work of the Public Works Department declined dramatically and in 1907 the office of Commissioner for Roads was discontinued.

Unfortunately local control over roads proved unsatisfactory. Certainly the state government transferred the financial burden of road making to local government. The road vote invariably exceeded the statutory minimum, but, after reaching $1,512,070 in 1911, remained below $1,000,000 after 1913. Conversely the amount spent on roads

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 59.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 270.
by councils increased from $356,138 in 1906 to $2,760,602 in 1919. Despite the increased expenditure councils generally lacked adequate equipment and qualified road engineers. The increasing number of cars on the roads accelerated their disintegration and heightened the demand for more expensive and sophisticated all weather surfaces. Few councils were able to meet the demand.

Councils were also accused of misusing the road money they received from the state government. It was claimed that the councils neglected '... various stretches of important main roads passing through non-rateable Crown lands or through poor rate producing property ...'.

The Shires were said to have maintained the roads near the centre of their domains whilst neglecting roads near their boundaries. The result of these policies was '... that the main roads fell into a chain of alternate good and bad stretches with no uniformity of construction or maintenance.' Even allowing for such delinquencies it must be recognised that the councils lacked the resources to do the work at the necessary standard.

It is somewhat ironic that the great affirmation of the principle of local government in New South Wales should come at the dawning of the motor age. Motor vehicles created

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24. Ibid.
a demand for an integrated state highway system. Such a
system was unlikely to be created through piecemeal local
control. The state government could have restricted the
motor vehicle to a localised role as a feeder to the
trains and trams and a provider of fill in services.
However no such restrictions were imposed. Instead a
Main Roads Board was established to administer a state
wide road building programme.

The centralising influence of motor transport had
serious implications for local government. Larcombe records
that by the end of the nineteenth century ad hoc bodies such
as the Transit Commission and the Water Board had emerged
to provide purely local services. State and local governments
were represented on these bodies. Ominously the Sydney
Harbour Trust, established in 1900, had no local government
representation. 'In this form the ad hoc authority
offered its greatest threat to local government prestige
by offering the opportunity to governments to filch its
major functions.'\textsuperscript{25} The cycle of local function, ad hoc
authority, government control was first completed in 1900
with the abolition of the Transit Commission and the transfer
of its functions to the Police Department\textsuperscript{26}. For a time
after 1906 new ad hoc authorities included local government
representatives but with the formation of the Main Roads

\textsuperscript{25} Larcombe, F.A., \textit{The advancement of local government

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
Board in 1925 the trend towards the exclusion of local representation revived\textsuperscript{27}. The motor vehicle, which heightened the demand for a centralised road administration, did not cause the revival of central takeovers of local functions but its role in hastening the process is worthy of comment.

The deficiencies of local control over roads were quickly recognised. Local government bodies called for greater financial assistance to enable them to effectively carry out their responsibilities. In 1911 a group of councils called for a motor tax of £5 p.a. to finance road construction and maintenance\textsuperscript{28}. Perhaps with the memory of the Local Government Act still fresh the councils could believe that they would be given adequate sources of revenue. However, in retrospect, it seems clear that if the State Government was forced to resume the financial burden of the roads it would insist on controlling the expenditure of the funds.

The State Government had begun considering new main roads legislation as early as 1909 and came under increasing public pressure to act. Rural, business and commercial interests realised the advantages of improved communications and understood that better roads would increase the usefulness of motor transport. Private motorists, too few in number to mount a viable independent campaign, showed interest in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid.
\item \textit{Daily telegraph}, 5 July 1911, p. 17.
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Sample of the Sandy "Interludes."  This is the Main Road.  An Opportunity for Looping the Loop.—(Contributed by Darse.)
improved roads but denounced the idea, widely accepted as reasonable, of financing the improvements through the imposition of a motor tax. Motorists regarded the motor tax as a class tax and argued that it would be fairer to tax all road users equally through a wheel tax. Still the A.C.A. took the initiative in the formation of a roads movement when, in 1912, the Committee resolved:

That in the opinion of this Club it is desirable to form a Good Roads Association, and that all bodies that represent users of the roads be immediately written to for their cooperation, and that a meeting of representatives of these bodies take place as soon as possible ...

The meeting was held on 19 September 1912 and it was resolved that a Good Roads Association be formed. J.G. Griffin, President of the Local Government Association, was elected President of the G.R.A. and on 4 October E.C. Bluett, Secretary of the Local Government Association, was appointed Secretary at an annual salary of £250.

Government action came in November 1912 when Arthur Griffith, Minister for Public Works and Minister in charge of local government, introduced the Local Government (Main Roads) Bill. The Bill provided for a main roads board composed of the officer in charge of local government, the local government engineer, a representative elected by the Shires Association and another representative elected by the Local Government Association. Griffith pointed out

that whereas the Local Government Act required a government road subsidy of at least £150,000 the allocation had crept up to £422,000. Under the new arrangement the road subsidy would not exceed £150,000, to be allocated on the basis of the amount of crown land in the council's area. An additional £250,000 would be distributed by the main roads board for expenditure on main roads. The board would proclaim main roads and set construction and maintenance standards.

Griffith's bill was denounced as an encroachment on the rights of local government bodies. W.H. Wood stated that:

... I have no objection to the government sand papering the roads if they find the money to do it, but I have the strongest objection to robbing the Shires to do it, or to any Government repudiating the underlying principle which has been given effect to in the Local Government Act.

Other critics, choosing to ignore the commercial and utilitarian potential of motor transport, argued that it was extravagant to build better roads for the benefit of pleasure seeking motorists. The critics triumphed as the bill was defeated by one vote on its second reading.

Griffith did not lose gracefully complaining that:

The opposition to this bill was very cleverly engineered indeed by half a dozen North Coast Shires who were mopping up the whole of this

32. Ibid.

subsidy. They feared a loss of this enormous endowment, and so got all the other Shires to protest, not knowing what they were objecting to.34

However the endowments paid to the Shires, which were set at varying rates in the £ based on general rate collections for the preceding year, were determined by the Public Works Department. One hundred and seven Shires were classified as eligible for endowment between 1909 and 191235 and the Public Works Department's statement of accounts for 1911, for example, does not show that 'half a dozen North Coast Shires' received the bulk of the endowment36.

Whatever Griffith's reasoning concerning the orchestration of opposition to the bill he was able to cause the councils some anxiety. In anticipation of the passage of the bill the government had allocated £250,000 to the main roads board in the estimates. With no board to control the money the position was unclear and Griffith gave the impression that he was prepared to allow the funds to revert to Consolidated Revenue. The councils, not surprisingly, protested against Griffith's plan. Finally a Local Government Department engineer, R.E. Jones, was instructed to inspect the roads and recommend a scheme for the distribution of the £250,00037.

34. Australian motorist, September 1913, p. 70.
35. N.S.W. Public Works Department Report, 1911-12, p. 111.
36. Ibid., p. 115.
37. Ibid., 1912-13, p. 85.
Public agitation for a main roads bill was not destroyed by the defeat of Griffith's bill. The Good Roads Association publicised the cause pointing out that bad roads increased transport costs, and consequently the cost of living, that bad roads endangered wage earning drivers, horses and vehicles, that dirty roads constituted a health hazard and that poor roads retarded the development of the State. In 1915 the Motor in Australia began a regular column entitled 'The King's High Wallaby Track' to keep the roads issue before its readers.

In December 1914 a new Local Government Bill, which included provision for a main roads board, was introduced. However the bill was a controversial one including provision for adult franchise in local government and the abolition of the rating limit. Both measures were anathema to local government interests. In the face of fierce opposition the Government withdrew the bill on 28 January 1915, re-introduced it on 12 February and then withdrew it in favour of a completely revised measure. The Local Government Amendment Bill No. 2 was introduced on 2 December 1915 and had reached its second reading by February 1916. The Premier, W.A. Holman, then announced that the adult franchise provision would be deleted from the bill, and submitted as a separate measure, in order to facilitate the passage of the remainder

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38. Motor in Australia, August 1913, p. 22.
An Illawarra Road

Motor in Australia
June 1915, p. 18
of the bill. However the bill had not proceeded beyond its second reading at the end of the 1916 parliamentary session making it necessary to redraft the measure for the 1917 session.

Public support for main roads legislation continued. In 1916 the A.C.A. had called on all Members of Parliament to support the Local Government Bill. On 11 April 1917 an A.C.A. deputation asked J.D. Fitzgerald, the Minister for Local Government, to establish a main roads board consisting of 'a finance member, a business member and an engineering member.' Support for a board of experts, with no local government representation, was growing in motoring circles and dividing motoring from local government interests. The Minister acknowledged that 'there was no more important subject than this so far as domestic legislation was concerned' and claimed that only a main roads board could create a satisfactory system of main roads for the whole state.

Commercial and business interests became more concerned about 'good roads' and on 16 May 1917 Sydney Chamber of Commerce convened a meeting at which local government, farmers, commercial interests and the Trolley and Draymen and Carters Union were represented. The meeting resolved to ask the Government to call a good roads convention which...
An Alleged Road in Illawarra

Motor in Australia
June 1915, p. 19
would formulate a definite roads policy. A deputation from
the meeting was advised that the Government was already
considering legislation but would offer no opposition
if the deputation still felt that the convention was
necessary after the legislation had passed\textsuperscript{42}.

A revised Local Government Bill was introduced on
28 June 1918. The Bill provided for a main roads board
composed of three government appointees. Other controversial
provisions of the Bill were the franchise, the unchanged
rating and borrowing limits, the power of councils to erect
shops, dwellings and other buildings for sale or lease,
provisions for recovery of damage to roads by excessive
loads and narrow tyres and control over roadside hoardings\textsuperscript{43}.

Meanwhile commercial interests had come to the fore in
the 'good roads' movement. Indeed in March 1918 the
\textbf{Australian motorist} claimed that the Good Roads Association
was moribund due to local government men diverting the
Association away from its original purpose, namely the
establishment of a main roads board\textsuperscript{44}. However the 'good
roads' campaigners persisted and the National Roads Convention
met in July 1918. The Convention called for the establishment
of a main roads board and the formulation of a national plan

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 29 June 1917, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{43} Maiden, op. cit., p. 123.

\textsuperscript{44} \textbf{Australian motorist}, March 1918, p. 601.
of road building. The national plan, in the Convention's opinion, should allow for the building of roads which would connect producing districts with their ports, provide through traffic routes between the city and its suburbs and between suburbs. The need to coordinate transport services was emphasised and motor transport was suggested as an alternative means of transport in areas not served by rail or by sea. The Convention agreed that the cost of road building should be shared equally by state and local governments. Many of these ideas became articles of faith for the 'good roads' movement during the following decade.

In August 1918 the 'good roads' movement was shaken by a report that the motor tax would be increased to help finance the proposed main roads board. Motorists denounced the idea and the Motorists Defence League was launched to fight the increase. However the issue died away when the Government decided to drop the main roads clauses in order to secure the passage of the remainder of the Local Government Bill. The Local Government Act came into force on 1 January 1920 but brought no solution to the roads problem.

The Government continued to wrestle with the roads problem. In August 1919 Holman stated that 'There will be no Main Roads Board. The work has been admirably done up till now by the Local Government Department, and there is no necessity to bring a new organisation into existence.'

45. Ibid., August 1918, p. 956.
46. Ibid., September 1919, p. 34.
The Local Government (Main Roads) Bill, introduced in October 1919, provided that the Minister for Local Government would exercise the powers previously intended for a Main Roads Board. The bill met most of the local authorities' demands but was not proceeded with.

There was a renaissance of the 'good roads' movement during the 1920s. In 1919 the National Roads Association was formed in Victoria. On 13 January 1920 a representative of the Association attended a meeting in Sydney Chamber of Commerce building. The meeting resolved to form a New South Wales branch of the Association. The fact that the meeting was held in the Chamber of Commerce building suggests a continuity between the earlier movement which had resulted in the Good Roads Convention of 1918 and the new Association. However the resurgence of 'Good roads' sentiment in New South Wales appears to have been largely due to Victorian influence. The new movement gained a national focus with the formation of a National Council of Roads Associations of Australia in 1921. However in New South Wales the national consciousness never predominated. The New South Wales branch was invariably referred to locally as the National Roads Association and this usage has been adopted for the remainder of this thesis.

Sir Owen Cox was elected foundation chairman of the N.R.A. but he resigned after a brief term. On 26 February J.C. Watson, who had served as Labor Prime Minister of

Australia in 1904, became chairman. Watson quickly established himself as the major spokesman of the road, and later motoring, movement. Experienced in business, political organisation and lobbying and possessing prestige as a former Prime Minister Watson was the leader the road and motoring movements needed. Certainly the N.R.A. gave Watson a cause, a platform and a continuing role in public life but his performance more than justified his position in the Association.

The N.R.A. cannot be said to have attracted widespread support. Some local government men, including A.R. Bluett and D.M. Cooper, prominent A.C.A. member, alderman and sometime Mayor of Randwick, supported the Association. Some commercial interests gave assistance with Farmers and David Jones each donating £50 in 1920⁴⁸. Support also came from sources with direct interests in road building⁴⁹. By 1920 'good roads' supporters had come to regard concrete as the best road surfacing material with almost 62,000,000 square yards being laid in the United States during the 1922 construction year⁵⁰. In 1923 Commonwealth Portland Cement Co. and Kandos Cement Co. each donated £25 to the N.R.A.⁵¹. Another contributor with a direct interest in road making

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⁴⁸. Ibid., 29 June 1920, p. 5.
⁴⁹. Ibid.
⁵¹. Ibid., 15 March 1923, p. 15.
was Teralba Quarries which donated £5/5-. The motor trade saw the advantages of supporting the road movement and in 1920 the M.T.A. donated £100 to the N.R.A. while Goodyear, Dunlop and the Texas Oil Co. each contributed £50. Nevertheless N.R.A. membership remained small and in May 1923 it was reported that the membership totalled only 749. The Association survived 1922 only by soliciting donations from Sydney business houses.

It appears that the N.R.A. gained little support from rural dwellers or motorists. In 1921 the Million Farms Committee and the N.R.A. agreed to endorse each others programmes and in 1922 the New States Movement called for improved roads. Nevertheless the N.R.A.'s country branches, the first of which was established in 1921, remained small. In addition the N.R.A. expressed open disappointment at the response from motorists. One well known motorist, Boyd Edkins, served on the N.R.A. Council and the Association's report for 1922-23 recorded a £25 donation from the A.C.A. However in 1921 J.C. Watson estimated that only 2% of motorists had joined the N.R.A. Apparently the road issue did not excite the ordinary citizen and the N.R.A. did not become a strong popular movement.

The N.R.A.'s programme was an orthodox 'good roads' one. Its prime objective was the immediate establishment

52. Motor in Australia, May 1923, p. 528.
53. Good roads, 15 December 1921, p. 17.
54. Ibid., 15 May 1922, p. 11.
of a main roads board\textsuperscript{56}. The Association advocated a rational programme of road building which would connect producing districts with their ports, provide through routes between Sydney and the country and create a rationally defined system of metropolitan main roads. The Association argued that the whole of the motor tax revenue should be allocated to road making 'as this money is raised by a special tax upon a class of people whose only qualification to be assessed to that tax is that they are road users.'\textsuperscript{57}

Despite its small numbers the N.R.A. maintained a vigorous publicity campaign. The main publicity medium was its journal \textit{Good roads}\textsuperscript{58}. More modern media were exploited and in 1921 the N.R.A. announced that it had acquired a number of films dealing with road making in the United States which it would lend to progress associations and similar bodies which could arrange public screenings\textsuperscript{59}. The N.R.A. proved a vigorous pressure group organising deputations to Ministers and other Members of Parliament. In 1922 \textit{Good roads} urged its readers to approach their local members on polling day and remind them that good roads were necessary to foster decentralisation, to act as feeders to the railways, to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources and to reduce transport costs\textsuperscript{60}.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 29 June 1920, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Good roads}, Vol. 1, no. 1, 15 July 1921.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 15 July 1921, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 15 March 1922, p. 3.
\end{flushleft}
In April 1920 the Storey Labor Government took office. During the year T.D. Mutch, Minister for Local Government, visited the United States and was impressed by the operation of roads boards there. In June 1920 a group of metropolitan councils had urged Mutch to establish a main roads board. Mutch seized on the enthusiasm of the metropolitan councils as a way round the legislative impasse and in July placed the draft of a Metropolitan Main Roads Bill before Cabinet. Mutch then asked the Shires Association Annual Conference whether or not the Shires would support a main roads board. Receiving a negative reply Mutch resolved to proceed with his Metropolitan Bill convinced that the Shires would support an extension of the measure to the rest of the State once its efficacy had been demonstrated.

Mutch's Bill, introduced in December 1920, provided for a Metropolitan Main Roads Board consisting of the Minister for Local Government as President ex officio and two members appointed under the Public Service Act. The functions of the Board were similar to those set down in the Local Government Bill of 1918. However the Bill was condemned by the metropolitan councils. Even Botany, in Mutch's own electorate, asked its Members of Parliament to oppose the Bill on the grounds that the council's share of the costs would be out of proportion to the benefits received. The Bill did not proceed beyond its first reading.

61. The worker, 6 July 1920, p. 5.
62. Daily telegraph, 12 June 1920, p. 3.
64. Daily telegraph, 26 February 1921, p. 10.
Meanwhile roads continued to deteriorate and by 1920 the condition of the metropolitan main roads was arousing great concern. It was reported that butchers and bakers were refusing to deliver to a number of suburbs due to road conditions. 'The result is that an enormous number of men of those suburbs buy the meat, fruit and groceries in the city shops and hump it, with curses, home at night in Gladstone bags.' Not that city butchers offered the finest meat. The condition of Parramatta Road forced Homebush abattoirs to send meat to the city by train which entailed double handling and delays in delivery to the shops. In April 1920 it was claimed that an 8 mile stretch of Parramatta Road between Ashfield and Parramatta was impassable to wheeled traffic. Consequently many people travelling between Parramatta and Sydney chose to go via Ryde while commercial carriers imposed surcharges of up to 50% to traverse Parramatta Road.

The State Government recognised the Parramatta Road problem but could not reach agreement with the local councils on sharing the cost of reconstruction. On 28 April 1920 a public meeting in Parramatta Town Hall, attended by representatives of the meat wholesalers, and Sydney and Parramatta businessmen, debated the problem. Frank B. Smith, representing the N.R.A., stated that Parramatta Road headed

67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 29 April 1920, p. 5.
the Association's list of roads in need of repair and pledged support. The meeting resolved to form a Parramatta Road Improvement League. D.M. Cooper, who represented the A.C.A. at the meeting, was elected to the League's Committee.

At the meeting of 28 April W.T. Ely, Labor M.L.A. for Parramatta, stated that while the Premier and the Treasurer recognised the importance of the road they had inherited an empty Treasury and could offer no immediate aid. However Ely promised that reconstruction would begin immediately if the League could raise sufficient funds through a loan\(^6\). The idea of a private organisation raising a loan to finance road works was not new. In 1920 the N.R.A. had proposed raising £2,000,000 by issuing £5 debentures. The money would be handed to the Government to finance the proposed main roads board. The Government would repay the loan at 5½% over 10 years with 2½% going to the debenture holders, 2% to be distributed as a lottery among the debenture holders and 1% to the N.R.A. to finance its propaganda work\(^7\). The Government had rejected the scheme.

The Parramatta Road Improvement League quickly attracted support and branches were established in suburbs along Parramatta Road. Ely was asked to provide an estimate of the cost of repairing Parramatta Road and to state the rate of interest which the Government would pay if the League

\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) *Australian motorist*, December 1920, p. 137.
could raise the loan\textsuperscript{71}. Surprisingly, on 7 May 1920, the Government announced that reconstruction would commence immediately with the Government recovering half the cost from the local councils over the succeeding 10 years\textsuperscript{72}. The Government did not say where the funds were found although its reasons for financing the work are not hard to find. Road construction work offered employment for the unskilled unemployed and the Labor Government may have funded the work partly as a form of unemployment relief. In addition the Treasurer, J.T. Lang, Ely's co-member for Parramatta, had both electoral and real estate interests which perhaps encouraged him to ransack the Treasury. Reconstruction work commenced on 21 May 1920.

At the reopening of Parramatta Road on 16 April 1921 Lang announced that the Government would float a £500,000 loan to finance the repair of all main roads in the County of Cumberland\textsuperscript{73}. Lang stated that work would commence as soon as £10,000 had been subscribed. This amount was immediately subscribed by the Manufacturers Mutual Insurance Co.\textsuperscript{74} Tattersalls Club followed with £4,350 and the M.T.A. and A.C.A. urged their members to subscribe\textsuperscript{75}. The initial enthusiasm was also evident when the Millions Club entertained

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 5 May 1920, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 7 May 1920, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 18 April 1921, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 20 April 1921, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 8 June 1921, p. 5.
J.C. Watson and T.D. Mutch with £2,735 being subscribed at the function. On 3 May Lang addressed a public meeting at Liverpool where £2,000 was subscribed. Next the Government decided to allow subscriptions in £10 multiples in an attempt to attract small investors.

Overall the loan received very favourable publicity and it was some time before it was made public that it was failing. The loan closed on 30 June 1921 with only £100,000 having been subscribed. Lang announced that the loan would remain open until 31 July and warned that continued road building and unemployment relief depended on its success. The Labor Caucus, after discussing Lang's pronouncement, urged him to find other sources of finance. On 6 July Lang announced that the Good Roads Loan had been abandoned and that the Treasury would fund the reconstruction of metropolitan main roads. Lang stated that the failure of the loan had confirmed his distrust of loans raised for specific purposes but also condemned the motoring public for failing to support the loan. It could also be said that the interest rate offered was not particularly attractive and that the failure of the loan only proved that investors would not support road loans out of charity.

76. Ibid., 18 May 1921, p. 8.
77. Ibid., 5 May 1921, p. 4.
78. Ibid., 7 July 1921, p. 4.
79. Ibid.
In the final analysis the Labor Government's attempts to reconstruct the metropolitan main roads without confronting the main roads board issue must be counted a failure. By the end of 1921 Parramatta Road was again disintegrating and the Motor in Australia proclaimed:

Today the gilt is off the gingerbread. The hollow fraud stands naked and revealed. The road is bung!...

As an example of political jobbery it is monumental. It was all top and no foundation, or if there was a foundation it was either made of the wrong material or laid in the worst possible and most unscientific manner. 80

The local councils shared this view blaming the fate of the road on bad foundations, slovenly workmanship and the use of inferior materials 81. Other critics claimed that the councils' maintenance methods had hastened the disintegration and that the unsatisfactory drainage favoured by the rebuilders had been aggravated by the councils 82. Wherever the fault lay the need for skilled supervision over both reconstruction and maintenance had become obvious.

Although no main roads bill had been introduced since 1920 the idea survived in official circles. Mutch believed...

... that the Board should be a Board chosen for its ability to do the work rather than its ability to obtain votes, and therefore it should be an appointed Board of experts rather than an elected Board of representatives. 83

81. Daily telegraph, 6 February 1923, p. 5.
82. Ibid.
83. N.S.W. Local Government Department Report, 1921-1922, p. 4.
In 1921 a bill was drafted in accordance with Mutch's ideas and copies were made available to the Local Government and Shires Associations. The Associations raised a number of objections, especially to the lack of local government representation and the meagreness of the State Government's financial contribution. The Local Government Association could accept the idea of a main roads board but wanted '... to create an independent body that would fairly apportion the cost of upkeep of main roads between the Government and the councils.'

Despite the criticism the Local Government Department believed that the opposition to the establishment of a main roads board was gradually vanishing. However Mutch's plans were never put into effect because the Labor Government lost office in April 1922.

The councils were not entirely negative on the road question. In 1918 North Sydney Council began reconstructing Alfred Street in concrete. In 1921 the Council announced that it had borrowed £55,000 to concrete all roads in the municipality. By February 1923 the project was complete and a concrete highway extended from Milsons Point to the North Sydney-Mosman municipal boundary at McPherson Street. Sydney City Council also attempted to put its roads in order and announced that £500,000 would be spent on reconstructing main roads.

84. Good roads, 15 November 1921, p. 7.
85. N.S.W. Local Government Department Report, 1921-1922, p. 4.
86. Good roads, 15 February 1923, p. 17.
87. Daily telegraph, 19 March 1921, p. 3.
Curlewis Street, Bondi: In the latter part of 1928 the vehicular portion of this road was reconstructed in concrete, but for a period of 15 or 16 years the condition of the road was as shown.

Avenue Rd., Mosman: The above conditions had existed for 15 years prior to the reconstruction of the vehicular road.

Dowling Street (eastern side), Moore Park: Showing existing condition of the road, which has been similar for many years.

Ramsay Road, Five Dock: For many years vehicular traffic used the tramway area owing to the condition of this road, but lately the vehicular portion has been reconditioned in tarred macadam.

Some Sydney Roads of the 1920s pictured before their reconstruction.
Councils also joined forces to repair main roads. Botany Road was second only to Parramatta Road in notoriety and as early as 1916 Botany Council had asked the Government to assist in its repair. The Government refused alleging that it lacked the necessary finance. In 1920 Cabinet authorised Mutch to offer to repair Botany Road if the local councils would repay half the cost over the succeeding 10 years. However the offer was withdrawn, again allegedly for financial reasons, after the Local Government Chief Engineer had estimated the cost at £321,500. Undaunted the municipalities of Alexandria, Botany, Mascot, Redfern and Waterloo sought legislative approval for the creation of a road trust. The Botany Road Trust Constitution Act of November 1922 empowered the Trust to reconstruct and maintain Regent Street from the boundary of the City of Sydney to its junction with Botany Road and Botany Road from Regent Street to Wilson Street, Botany. A loan of £200,000 was to be raised and repaid from the revenues of the participating councils. £112,500 was to be made available from Consolidated Revenue during the succeeding 15 years.

The Botany Road Trust was the most elaborate of the cooperative ventures but other councils collaborated to complete significant works. In 1923 Woollahra and Paddington Councils cooperated in repairing Jersey Road. Reports circulated that Balmain, Drummoyne, Hunters Hill and Ryde

89. Ibid.
Councils were negotiating to form a trust to repair and maintain the main road from Glebe Island Bridge to Ryde Station. The trust movement achieved worthwhile results in the case of individual roads but could hardly be expected to create a coordinated network of state highways. In addition the state government was unlikely to subsidise an ever increasing number of trusts.

During the era of the road loans and the local government trusts a new force entered the road building arena. In December 1918 the Federal Government offered to advance money to the states to finance road works which would provide employment for returned soldiers. As the money was only a loan New South Wales declined to participate in the scheme. In 1919 the Federal Government, faced with increasing unemployment among returned soldiers, made an outright grant of £500,000 to finance road works. New South Wales received £132,338. The work was carried out by local councils who received approximately £600 each from the federal grant.

The 'good roads' movement welcomed federal involvement in road building. The N.R.A. believed that a federal department should be created to control interstate highways. In 1922 the Federal Conference of National Roads Associations resolved:

90. Good roads, 15 August 1923, p. 9
That in view of the fact that the main roads are utilized by the Government for postal purposes, from which revenue is derived, and that they are absolutely necessary for defence purposes, this conference urges the Federal Government to subsidize all of the State Governments in the development of main roads in Australia.

Federal involvement in road making increased in 1922 when the Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, announced that £250,000 would be divided among the States on a £ for £ per capita basis. The money was intended to relieve unemployment but only through work on the main Southern Road, the main Northern Road, the Princes Highway and important roads leading from these highways to settlements. New South Wales benefitted by £96,627 but the Federal Government had established the precedent of imposing conditions on the expenditure of the road grants it made.

At the Premiers' Conference in May 1923 the Commonwealth announced that a Main Roads Development Act would be passed allocating £500,000 from Consolidated Revenue to finance road works by the States on a £ for £ basis. The money would be divided between the States on a 60% population 40% area basis. New South Wales complained that it could not meet the conditions of the grant since it had no main roads department and its road works were undertaken by local governments. This objection was ignored and the Act became law in June 1923. Eventually the Commonwealth paid over New South Wales' share in the absence of a main roads

93. Ibid., 9 November 1922, p. 5.
department but the roads question now became crucial. Aitkin regards the federal action as decisive in bringing on main road legislation claiming that the Premier 'Fuller who was dilitory by temperament, would probably have done nothing further had it not been for the passage of a federal Main Roads Act in 1923 ....',\textsuperscript{95} There is little doubt that the federal legislation provided a powerful stimulus to action in New South Wales.

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In February 1923 the Fuller Government announced that a new Main Roads Bill would be introduced\textsuperscript{96}. The N.R.A. attempted to ease the passage of the Bill by reducing local government suspicion. Local governments, staggering under the increasing burden of maintaining the roads, were ready to listen. On 11 June 1923 representatives of the N.R.A., Local Government and Shires Associations met to discuss the issue. The Local Government Association readily agreed to support the establishment of a Main Roads Board covering the whole state and financed by motor tax revenue and equal contributions from State and local governments.

Some Shires still suspected that a Country Main Roads Board would be more sympathetic to country interests. In June the Shires Association, by a majority vote,

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commissioned its executive to report on the operations of the Victorian and Queensland roads boards\textsuperscript{97}. A conference of delegates would consider the report and make a submission to the Premier. The report was received on 31 July 1923. The delegates resolved to accept a Main Roads Board for the whole state provided that the State Government met the entire cost of national roads and up to two thirds of the cost of other roads. A deputation conveyed the decision to the Government which agreed to accommodate the Shires as far as possible.

Meanwhile the Main Roads Bill had failed to appear in Parliament. In order to add weight to its campaign the N.R.A. decided to recruit new supporters. Private motorists seemed likely converts. As many motorists had bitterly criticised the severity of police enforcement of the traffic regulations the rallying cry was obvious. When D.M. Cooper suggested at the N.R.A.'s annual meeting in 1923 that the Association should cooperate with the A.C.A. on traffic questions Watson replied that the N.R.A. was concerned with the roads themselves and not their regulation\textsuperscript{98}. Nevertheless, within 6 months, the N.R.A. convened a public meeting to condemn harsh enforcement of the traffic regulations.

In 1925 Good roads explained that in July 1923 the newspaper the Evening news had suggested that Sydney needed

\textsuperscript{97} Good roads, 15 June 1923, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 16 April 1923, p. 12.
a motoring organisation similar to the British Automobile Association. In October 1923 the N.R.A. Council directed its Secretary to ask the Evening News to support the Association's plan to establish such a body. Agreement was reached and the Evening News vigorously publicised the N.R.A.'s efforts. It was fortunate that this issue emerged just as the N.R.A., with the end of the road agitation in sight, was looking for a cause on which to perpetuate its existence. The public meeting held on 28 November 1923 resolved that the N.R.A. should extend its objectives to allow it to serve the interests of motorists and that it should assume the name National Roads and Motorists Association. A special meeting of the N.R.A. Council on 20 December endorsed the resolution. The N.R.M.A. acknowledged the assistance received from the Evening News by granting the paper's motoring correspondent, E.C. Crane, N.R.M.A. car badge number 1.

At the end of 1923 it appeared that the Main Roads Bill was again in peril. The Local Government Department stated that the Bill had been delayed because of '... the difficult financial position ... rendering it impracticable for the Minister to secure Treasury sanction to include in the measure financial provisions reasonably sufficient for the purpose.' In addition Fuller's coalition partners, the Progressives, were becoming restive. In October

99. Ibid., 15 August 1925, p. 43.
100. Ibid., 15 December 1923, p. 7.
1. N.S.W. Local Government Department Report, 1923-1924, p. 3.
J.C.L. Fitzpatrick, the Minister in charge of the Bill, warned Cabinet that Fuller's proposal to divert one third of the motor tax to Consolidated Revenue would be opposed by the Progressives who wanted the whole of the motor tax revenue paid into the road fund\(^2\). The coalition partners were in disagreement on a number of other issues. In December 1923 it was reported that Cabinet was anxious to adjourn Parliament and was prepared to jettison a number of significant measures, including the Main Roads Bill to hasten the adjournment\(^3\). On 17 December Fuller received a deputation from the N.R.A., Local Government and Shires Associations which protested at the non appearance of the Bill. Fuller replied that the Bill was being redrafted and would be introduced during 1924\(^4\).

The Government still had to resolve the finance problem and in May 1924 Fitzpatrick undertook to ask the Prime Minister if an additional petrol tax could be imposed to finance roads. The N.R.M.A., Local Government Association and farmers, who used petrol for purposes other than as motor fuel, criticised this proposal\(^5\). The Commonwealth, which was already raising revenue through a petrol tax, rejected Fitzpatrick's request. Continued delay angered the N.R.M.A. which announced that a monster meeting would

\(^2\) Aitkin, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
\(^3\) Daily telegraph, 5 December 1923, p. 9.
\(^4\) Ibid., 18 December 1923, p. 7.
\(^5\) Ibid., 30 May 1924, p. 4.
be held on 11 August to urge the Government to proceed with
the Bill. If the Bill passed in the meantime the meeting
would commend the Government. Finally the Treasury agreed
to finance the Main Roads Board. The Bill was introduced
on 7 August, received assent on 10 November and the Main
Roads Board began operating on 1 January 1925.

The Main Roads Board established by the Act had three
members, two of whom were to be engineers with extensive
knowledge of road construction, appointed for seven year
terms under the Public Service Act. Road construction and
maintenance was to be carried out by local councils although
the Governor could, in special circumstances, empower the
Board to do the work. The Act allocated the motor tax
revenue, less a 10% collection fee, to the Board.
Simultaneously the Motor Vehicles (Taxation) Act altered
the basis of motor taxation from the horsepower of a vehicle
to its weight and the type of tyre used. A car with pneumatic
tyres was to be taxed at the rate of 2/9 per cwt. while one
with non-pneumatic or solid tyres was taxed 3/3 per cwt.
This change favoured lighter, higher powered vehicles. The
tax on Fords increased by 2/6 per annum while the tax on the
heavier Vauxhall increased by £5. Rolls Royce owners found
that their tax had decreased by £4 per year.

Three separate road funds were established by the Act.
The County of Cumberland Main Roads Fund received half the

motor tax collected in the County, £25,000 from Consolidated Revenue and contributions from local councils at the rate of ¼d in the £ on the unimproved capital value of suburban land and ¼d in the £ on the unimproved capital value of suburban land used for agriculture and on land in the City of Sydney. The Country Main Roads Fund received £90,000 from Consolidated Revenue, all the motor tax collected in the country and half the motor tax collected in the County of Cumberland '... in recognition of the large use made by metropolitan car owners of country main roads.' 7 No levy was imposed on the Shires but the Board could negotiate a contribution on a £ for £ basis from any council which benefitted from a road work and possessed a reserve power to require a council to contribute to a particular work. The third fund, the Development Road Fund, was to be financed from loan money. The Board itself had no power to raise loans but the Government undertook, in each of the first five years of the Board's existence, to raise £200,000 for the Cumberland Fund, £300,000 for the Country Fund and £138,000 for the Development Roads Fund.

The Federal Government made the next significant move in road legislation. The Commonwealth Main Roads Development Acts of 1924 and 1925 had made grants available to the States on the pattern of the 1923 Act. On 5 December 1925 New South Wales was advised that the Federal Government intended to grant £2,000,000 per annum to the States over the succeeding

ten years for road works. £500,000 p.a. would be made available from existing sources of revenue while the balance would be raised from increased customs duties on motor vehicle parts and petrol. The distribution would follow the 60% population 40% area formula with the States required to contribute £ for £ from existing sources of revenue. The funds could be spent only on roads which would open up and develop new country, on trunk roads between important towns and on arterial roads. The federal Minister of Works would oversee the expenditure and could divert funds allocated to a State from other works to ensure the maintenance of roads reconstructed under the scheme.

The Federal plan was widely criticised. The Lang Government condemned it as a restriction on State's rights and argued that the money should be distributed in proportion to the amount of customs duties collected in each state. The petrol companies financed an extensive press and political campaign against the increase in petrol duties and were denounced in Parliament by the Prime Minister. Ultimately Prime Minister Bruce relented to the extent of reducing the State's contribution to 15/- for each £ and limiting the increase in customs duties to petrol used to fuel road vehicles. Following the passage of the Federal Aid Roads

8. Ibid., p. 82.
9. N.S.W. Main Roads Commissioner undated note in Australia. Prime Minister's Department, Federal Aid Highways Scheme and Roads Policy file C.A. CRS 552.
Act Victoria challenged the measure in the High Court and New South Wales refused to ratify the agreement. The other four States immediately agreed to participate in the scheme and in December, following defeat in the High Court, Victoria joined in.

Lang proved more obdurate than his Victorian counterparts. The Main Roads Board was eager to accept Commonwealth money$^{11}$ but Lang held out for a better deal for New South Wales. 'Good roads' supporters failed to see the wisdom of Lang's stand. The N.R.M.A. had opposed the increased petrol duties but argued that it was foolish to reject New South Wales' share of the federal grant once the Act had passed and survived a High Court challenge. The N.R.M.A. denounced the 'misguided potentate' Lang as '... an obstinate obstruction in the path of the good roads movement.'$^{12}$ Lang was no doubt unmoved by the N.R.M.A.'s fury but found Bruce equally unmoved by his demands. After '... a final definite effort to secure better terms for his state ... [Lang] signed the agreement on 17 June 1927, and thus, by joining within the financial year ending 30 June 1927 enabled the State to reserve and preserve its right to that years money.'$^{13}$

Lang's own road legislation was condemned by the roads lobby. On 15 October 1926 Lang transferred the Main Roads Board from the Local Government to the Labour and Industry

11. Roadmakers, p. 89.
13. N.S.W. Main Roads Department Report, 1926-27, p. 35.
portfolio. The official explanation was that the Board had become a large employer of unskilled labour and should be controlled by the Department of Labour and Industry.\textsuperscript{14} The move horrified the road lobby which had always advocated 'scientific' road making and had no wish to see the Board transformed into an unemployment relief agency.

Worse still, in the road lobby's opinion, was Lang's Finance (Taxation Management) Act of December 1926 which overthrew the principle that the Road Funds should receive the whole of the motor tax revenue. The Act fixed the amount of motor tax to be paid to the Road Funds at the 1924 level of £106,155, plus £6,300 from Metropolitan Traffic Act fees, for the Cumberland Fund and £452,382 for the country fund and diverted the balance to Consolidated Revenue.\textsuperscript{15} Lang's action was not unique because in 1926 the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, had taken £7,000,000 from the road fund and announced that in future one third of the motor tax would be considered an impost on the luxury and pleasure aspects of the motor vehicle and be paid direct to the Exchequer.\textsuperscript{16} In 1927 Churchill transferred the entire £12,000,000 balance in the road fund to the Exchequer.\textsuperscript{17} Churchill's actions did not mitigate Lang's villany in the eyes of his critics and his 'raid' on the Road Fund was loudly condemned.

\begin{itemize}
\item 14. Roadmakers, p. 87.
\item 15. N.S.W. Main Roads Department Report, 1926-27, p. 1.
\item 16. Plowden, op. cit., p. 209.
\item 17. Ibid., p. 212.
\end{itemize}
The Main Roads Board estimated that it lost £573,453 in revenue during the first year of Lang's scheme but a grant of £138,000 to the Development Roads Fund offset the loss in revenue. From 30 June 1927 the Board also received grants for larger works which would create work for the unemployed. However the Board could not use these funds as it pleased. Perhaps the main impact of Lang's policy was to force the Board to abandon its plan to increase assistance to country councils from £ to £2 for £1 on the Great Arterial Highways and £1-10-0 for £1 on other roads.

Although the N.R.M.A. claimed to be a non political body it actively campaigned against Lang after the 'raid'. Watson asserted that Lang was guilty of '... the most discreditable and retrograde breach of faith by looting the Road Board's money ....' At the N.R.M.A.'s annual meeting Watson urged members to use their influence against the politicians responsible for the diversion of the motor tax. During the 1927 election campaign Watson endorsed the Nationalists' roads policy and welcomed the return of the Bavin Government. Watson saw Lang's defeat as proof that motorists '... should be regarded as a force to be reckoned with whenever any legislative assault on their rights is contemplated.'

21. Ibid., 11 October 1927, p. 3.
22. Ibid.
Under the Bavin Government the Main Roads Board returned to the Local Government portfolio which had been conferred on M.F. Bruxner. In November 1927 the Main Roads (Amendment) Act restored the motor tax revenue, less 10% collection fee, to the Road Funds. During the debate on the Bill the Labor Member C.C. Lazzarini protested that motor vehicles were draining the general revenue by increasing the number of police needed for point duty, by taking revenue away from the trains and trams and by filling the public hospitals with accident victims. Accordingly, Lazzarini argued, motorists should be required to contribute to the general revenue through the motor tax.

The N.R.M.A. came under notice when Captain Dunn alleged that the N.R.M.A. '... which is a purely political body and utilised a considerable amount of its funds for political purposes during the last election ... seems to unduly control the operations of the Main Roads Board.' Bruxner replied that the N.R.M.A. was an association of motorists operating to protect its members' interests and that he knew of no '... official capacity in which they can direct the expenditure of money.' Bruxner added that he personally was not subservient to the N.R.M.A. and was not amenable to pressure from that source. According to his biographer Bruxner believed that roads should be built to last and suspected that the N.R.M.A. favoured immediate, if short term, improvements at the expense of larger objectives. In addition,

24. Ibid., 30 November 1927, p. 872.
25. Ibid., 30 November 1927, p. 876.
'... Watson's lordly omniscience in matters of transport infuriated him.'

On 22 May 1928 Bruxner advised the Shires Association Conference that the Government intended to reclassify country main roads into the categories of State Highways 'the primary avenues of road communication connecting the State of New South Wales with the neighbouring States, or the far interior with the coast, especially where no railway communication exists,' Trunk Roads, 'the secondary avenues of road communication, forming with the State Highways, the framework of a general system of intercommunication throughout the State especially where no railway exists,' and Main Roads '... the residue of roads classified as Main Roads at the time of the announcement...' Significantly the scheme accepted roads as a substitute for new railways. The aim of the reclassification was '... to divide the main roads into their order of importance and to provide corresponding degrees of State assistance to each class'.

State assistance to State Highways would amount to meeting the entire cost of a 20 feet width of pavement plus four feet shoulders on either side. Trunk roads were to be subsidized at the rate of £2 for £1 and main roads at not

27. N.S.W. Main Roads Department Report, 1927-28, p. 2.
28. Ibid., p. 3.
29. Ibid., p. 4.
30. Ibid., p. 12.
less than £ for £. Following a meeting on 25 May 1928, at which the Government accepted some major modifications to the scheme, '... Councillor D.N. Maxwell, President of the Shires Association, stated that the scheme and the financial assistance contemplated went far beyond what the Shires had thought possible, and met with the entire concurrence of the Association.'

The Main Roads Amendment Act, passed in April 1929, gave statutory approval to the new road classification. The Western Division of the State was brought under the provisions of the Act. The Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission was placed in the position of a council for the purposes of the Act so that roads under its administration could be subsidized on the same basis as if they were controlled by a Shire. The Act abolished annual grants from Consolidated Revenue to the Roads Funds but the Government undertook to make £200,000 available to the Cumberland Fund and £300,000 available to the Country Fund from loan money. The loans would be a charge against the Roads Funds whereas previously half the cost of loan money expended on main roads had been met from Consolidated Revenue. However the Government could make loan money available to the Board, especially for unemployment relief works, on other terms. These measures left the motor tax revenue as the financial foundation of the State's main roads programme.

31. Ibid., p. 13.
Despite its fluctuating fortunes and criticism from the N.R.M.A. the Main Roads Board had overseen significant improvements in New South Wales main roads by 1930. The Board concentrated on filling in the 'missing links' thus making roads trafficable throughout their entire length. The amount of work completed by the Board is shown in Table 8.

The Board also pursued a policy of replacing punts with bridges and upgrading existing bridges. In 1932 the Board decided that, since the roads had been improved to good trafficable condition, from 1 November it would meet the whole cost of bridges on State Highways and Trunk Roads and 75% of the cost of bridges on ordinary Main Roads. Between 1925 and 30 June 1940 the Board authorised the construction of 1,002 bridges, aggregating 18 miles and 648 feet at a cost of £2,686,219. In 1925 13 unbridged streams had to be crossed by ferry between Sydney and Tweed Heads. By 1935 seven of the ferries had been replaced by bridges.

Road building was curtailed during the Great Depression. Road making was promoted as a means of creating work for the unemployed but governments had less revenue available. In May 1929 the Premiers' Conference asked the Federal Government to increase the petrol tax by 4d. per gallon and to distribute the proceeds, according to the amount collected in each state,

32. Motor in Australia, May 1935, p. 43.
33. N.S.W. Department of Main Roads Report, 1939-1940, p. 8.
1. Old timber structure.  2. New concrete culvert at Kilgoorrah Creek, Hume Highway.

Motor in Australia
August 1935, p. 35

An example of the Main Roads Board's work. An old timber structure (top) replaced by a concrete culvert at Kilgowah Creek, Hume Highway.
### TABLE 8*

Main Roads Board work completed 1/1/1925-30/6/1929

(a) County of Cumberland work completed 1/1/1925-30/6/1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Miles</th>
<th>Feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth formation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravel</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water bound macadam</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macadam sprayed with tar or bitumen</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penetration tar or bituminous macadam</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premixed tar or bituminous macadam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement concrete</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement concrete surfaced with asphaltic concrete</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>116</td>
<td>3,828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Country works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Miles</th>
<th>Feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearing</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>3,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth formation</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming and loaming</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravel</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>3,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken stone (macadam)</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>2,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravel and macadam sprayed with tar or bitumen</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penetration tar or bituminous macadam</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premixed tar or bituminous macadam</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement concrete</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken stone (macadam)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,660</td>
<td>1,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) Bridges constructed by the Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2,580'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4,670'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4,100'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5,580'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N.S.W. Main Roads Board Report 1928-29, pp. 71-72.*
for road works. The higher petrol tax would be offset by a reduction in state motor taxes\textsuperscript{34}. The R.A.C.A. and the N.R.M.A. acknowledged that the tax, which would chiefly affect those making most use of the roads, was a fair one. The M.T.A., which represented commercial operators who would suffer most, was alone in opposing the tax\textsuperscript{35}. The Federal Government rejected the plan arguing that it lacked the constitutional authority to scrutinize state tax legislation to ensure that the states kept their side of the bargain\textsuperscript{36}.

Harder times persuaded the Premiers to renew their request in 1930 but without the guarantee that the revenue would be devoted to road works. The R.A.C.A. and the N.R.M.A. then declared their opposition to the plan and joined the M.T.A. in a deputation to the Federal Treasurer, E.G. Theodore. Theodore explained to the deputation that the Federal Government had agreed to increase the petrol tax on the understanding that state motor taxes would be reduced\textsuperscript{37}. However petrol consumption declined during the Depression and it soon became clear that the petrol tax revenue would not

\textsuperscript{34} Extract from proceedings of Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers, Canberra, May 1929, Australia. Prime Minister's Department, 'Petrol tax policy 1924-1947.' C.A. CRS A461 item G376/1/11, part 1.

\textsuperscript{35} Daily telegraph, 27 May 1929, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{36} Prime Minister to State Premiers, 13 June 1929, Australia, Prime Minister's Department, 'Petrol tax policy 1924-1947.' C.A. CRS A461, item G376/1/11, part 1.

\textsuperscript{37} Motor traders journal, 15 March 1930, p. 77.
cover the federal contribution to the Federal Aid Roads Agreement. In addition the states were struggling to raise sufficient road revenue to qualify for the full federal grant.

The Federal Aid Roads (Further Agreement) Act of 1932 released the states from their obligation to contribute 15/- for each £1 of federal aid. The states were also empowered to spend funds on maintenance as well as construction or reconstruction. Projects financed under the Agreement were no longer subject to Federal approval. The Federal Government divested itself of the obligation to advance £2,000,000 each year. Instead an additional 2½d per gallon customs duty and an additional 1½d per gallon excise duty were imposed on petrol and the proceeds became the national government's contribution to the scheme. It was estimated that the new duties would raise between £1,400,000 and £1,580,000 per annum. The new charges boosted the petrol tax to 7½d per gallon which was ½d less than the petrol tax levied in Britain and New Zealand. This was small consolation to Australian motorists who paid more but saw road revenue decline. State motor taxes were not reduced.

The reduction in federal aid was not the only consequence of the Depression for the Main Roads Board. In October 1930 some survey and design staff were retrenched and between February and June 1931 all metropolitan field survey staff and drawing office staff were rationed to 5 weeks work each
six weeks. Lang's dispute with Canberra resulted in the withholding of all federal aid after April 1931. This forced the Board to retrench administrative, clerical and engineering staff and unemployment relief works were suspended between October 1931 and September 1932. Lang's Ministry of Transport Act of 1932 went so far as to abolish the Board. A Highway and Road Transportation branch within the new Ministry of Transport took over the Board's functions.

Lang's demise was followed by the restoration of the Main Roads Board under the Transport (Division of Functions) Act of 1932. As prosperity returned road building increased. The Main Roads Amendment Act of 1936 increased the rates of assistance on trunk roads to £3 for £1 and on main roads to £2 for £1. The higher rates were financed by returning the whole of the motor tax to the roads funds. The Act also gave force to the decision, taken in 1935, to give the Main Roads Board responsibility for all roads, bridges and ferries in the Western Division.

Federal involvement in road building was confirmed for a further 10 years by the Federal Aid Roads and Works Act of 1937. Aid was to be distributed on the basis of 5% to Tasmania and the balance to the other States divided 40% according to area and 60% according to population. The States received 3d per gallon from customs duties and 2d per gallon from excise duties and were obliged to spend all but 4d per gallon on road construction, reconstruction and

38. Roadmakers, p. 128.
maintenance. The balance could be spent on roads or other works connected with transport.

In 1939 the financial burden of developmental roads was handed over to motorists. The Government announced a 12½% increase in motor taxes from 1 December 1939. The Main Roads (Amendment) Act of 1939 set aside the extra revenue to meet the cost of constructing developmental roads. In addition the interest, sinking fund and other charges on loan money used for the construction of developmental roads and certain main roads prior to 1 December 1939 had to be covered from the additional motor tax.

By 1939 the 'good roads' movement could be considered a long term success. The Main Roads Board had a continuing programme in hand. Both the state and federal government had provided considerable amounts of road revenue. Governments were able to raise most of their road revenue through motor and petrol taxes. Thus road construction was less painful for governments than rail construction which had been financed from general revenue and through loans. Although motorists had played an insignificant role in the 'good roads' movement they were the main beneficiaries of its triumph. Ever improving roads greatly facilitated the growth of motor transport.

39. N.S.W. Department of Main Roads Report, 1939-1940, p. 5.
CHAPTER 4: GROWING PAINS 1920 - 1929

The 1920s saw a significant increase in the number of motor vehicles in New South Wales. As prosperity increased the circle of potential motorists widened. Concurrently motor cars became cheaper and improvements in comfort and mechanical features encouraged their adoption. The success of the road agitation made the future look even rosier to motorists. The increasing strength of the motoring community was reflected in, and reinforced by, the emergence of the National Roads and Motorists Association as an assertive pressure group. Unfortunately the increase in the number of motor vehicles caused greater traffic congestion. Worse still the motor accident rate spiralled provoking an increasing demand for stricter traffic regulation.

The number of motor vehicles in New South Wales increased from 43,480, or 2.1 per 100 of population, in 1921 to 243,298, or 9.9 per 100 of population, in 1929. In the same years the number of motor cars increased from 28,665, or 1.35 per 100 of population, to 170,039, or 6.86 per 100 of population. These developments appear unspectacular in comparison with North American developments. Flink points out that in 1927, when production of the Model T Ford ceased, the United States, with 80% of the world's automobiles, had one motor vehicle for every 5.3 people. By contrast, New South Wales had one motor vehicle for every 6.6 people.

**TABLE 9**

Motor vehicles registered in New South Wales 1920-1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cars</th>
<th>Trucks</th>
<th>Cycles</th>
<th>Cars per 100 of popn.</th>
<th>Vehicles per 100 of popn.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>25,197**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,236</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>28,665</td>
<td>3,524</td>
<td>11,291</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>34,762</td>
<td>4,465</td>
<td>12,143</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>46,427</td>
<td>7,626</td>
<td>14,345</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>62,471</td>
<td>11,970</td>
<td>18,112</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>82,175</td>
<td>16,276</td>
<td>22,536</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>104,675</td>
<td>22,986</td>
<td>25,424</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>129,985</td>
<td>30,517</td>
<td>28,054</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>155,403</td>
<td>37,129</td>
<td>30,882</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>9.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>170,039</td>
<td>42,594</td>
<td>30,665</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>9.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Compiled from Official yearbook of N.S.W. 1921/2, 1929/30.

** Trucks included with cars
Zealand had one motor vehicle for each 10.5 people, Canada one per 10.7 people, and Australia one for each 16 people. France and the United Kingdom with 44 people for each motor vehicle lagged even further behind. New South Wales, with one vehicle for each 12.7 people in 1927, was somewhat ahead of the national average but significantly behind the United States figure. Nevertheless a seven fold increase in the number of motor vehicles in New South Wales between 1920 and 1929 could not be ignored.

The increase in the number of private motor vehicles in New South Wales during the 1920s was encouraged by improvements in the vehicles themselves. Automobiles became safer and easier to drive between 1920 and 1929. In 1921, for the first time, all the competitors in the French Grand Prix had four wheel brakes. By the end of the 1920s four wheel brakes were fitted to many production models enabling them to stop more quickly and safely. The low pressure balloon tyre, introduced in 1922, offered a more comfortable ride and eliminated the risks associated with blow outs. From 1924 electric starters became standard equipment and few would have mourned the passing of the crank handle. Mass production techniques placed the closed sedan body within the reach of most motorists making motoring a year round activity. By 1925 closed bodies were more common than open bodies on new cars. Furthermore the plate glass windscreen had been superseded and in 1928 even Ford was fitting safety glass windscreens.
The 1920s also saw reductions in the price of cars and an expansion of credit facilities. The Chevrolet, for example, cost £545 in 1920 and only £210 in 1926\textsuperscript{3}. Meanwhile weekly wages in Sydney increased from 94/- in 1920 to 102/11 in 1929\textsuperscript{4}. In addition credit facilities expanded significantly. Some dealers had always allowed customers to pay off vehicles on terms but dealers were limited by their ability to obtain credit to maintain their stocks. By 1923 it was estimated that the majority of cars were being purchased on time payment\textsuperscript{5}. Deposits ranged from 25\% to 33.33\% with the balance repayable over 12 or 18 months at 6\%\% for new cars. Deposits for used cars ranged from 33.33\% to 40\% and the balance was paid over 12 months at 8\%. During the 1920s companies such as Motor Credits Ltd. (1924), Automobile Investment Co. of Australasia Ltd. (1925) and Automobile and General Finance Co. Ltd. (1926) were established. Business was apparently good as it was reported in 1926 that one company had paid out 70\% on its paid up capital\textsuperscript{6}. The companies were presumably less exacting in their credit ratings than the banks and made car ownership possible for a wider circle of people.

People who could not afford motor cars were not necessarily excluded from enjoying the motor boom. The number of motor

\textsuperscript{3} Stubbs, Peter, The Australian motor industry, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1972, p. 8.


\textsuperscript{5} Daily telegraph, 2 October 1923, 'Spring motor supplement', p. 14.

\textsuperscript{6} The review, 31 August 1926, p. 323.
cycles increased from 11,291 in 1921 to 30,655 in 1929. The young utilised the motor cycle and the practice of carrying a pillion passenger sitting on a cushion on the carrier became so popular with a certain sector that the carrier became known as the 'flapper bracket.' A more sedate class of motor cycle owners carried their passengers in side-cars. Buses and trucks introduced even more people to the motor age. Buses and trucks could be hired to transport revellers, and often considerable quantities of alcohol, to less accessible picnic and beach resorts. One correspondent informed Good roads that:

Without, I think, being snobby, I always go to Palm Beach because of the nice crowd that is usually there ... but now the beach seems as bad as any of the closer beaches for noise and rubbish etc. owing to buses and lorries bringing loads of people down there.

While the number of people using motor cars increased between 1920 and 1929 it is difficult to document the exact uses to which the vehicles were put. Pro motor commentators made extravagant claims. One writer claimed that the motor car '... has done a great deal to break up the hard drinking and gambling clubs and change the selfish indulgence of the man of the family into the pleasure and happiness of all.'

Motor vehicles probably did not work such miracles but they

7. Dunlop Rubber Company, Motoring and cycling notes, 3 September 1921, pp. 1-2.
were put to diverse uses. In April 1927 a gypsy charged with theft failed to appear in Mudgee Police Court. The Police complained that it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of gypsies and pointed out that the band in question was travelling by motor car and lorry\textsuperscript{11}. Another effect of the motor car was pointed out by Bishop Radford at the 1928 Anglican Synod. The Bishop claimed that by using motor cars the clergy could cover two or three times the area they had previously thus reducing the demand for clergy and making it difficult to place newly ordained priests\textsuperscript{12}.

\vspace{1cm}

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The increase in the number of motor vehicles was paralleled by an expansion within the motor industry. Between 1921 and 1928 statistics of industrial establishments engaged in horse and motor transport were recorded separately. The increasing strength of the motor industry is shown in table 10.

The idea of a local motor manufacturing industry persisted. In 1923 it was announced that a Sulman Simplex car would be marketed and in 1926 it was stated that the National Motor Car Manufacturing Company was being formed. Again manufacturing ventures failed and only body building prospered. The Federal Government demonstrated its faith in

\textsuperscript{11} Daily telegraph, 6 April 1927, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{12} Open road, 24 March 1928, p. 17.
### TABLE 10

**Industrial establishments' horse and motor transport**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Establishments 1921</th>
<th>Establishments 1928</th>
<th>Employees 1921</th>
<th>Employees 1928</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach and waggon building</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>1,299</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddlery and harness</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor engineering, car assembly and repairing</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>1,896</td>
<td>5,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor body building</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>1,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor cycles and bicycles</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N.S.W. Statistical Register, 1920-1, pp. 546-7, 1927-8, pp. 486-7.*
the future of the body building industry by purchasing a factory in Queen Street, Chippendale and establishing a training school for returned soldiers\textsuperscript{13}. The Motor Traders Association arranged work for the school and undertook to place the soldiers in employment once they had reached 40\% efficiency. The training was intensely practical. All panel beating and wood working was done by hand to fit the trainees for work in unmechanised country workshops.

In practice body building was becoming a capital city enterprise. In 1923 it was reported that because chassis were sold and distributed from Sydney country people were tending to accept vehicles complete with city built bodies\textsuperscript{14}. As country body builders lost the new body trade they were forced to diversify their interests. For example, the Heppner Waggon Works at Walla Walla, which once employed 40 hands making waggon and truck bodies, switched to manufacturing road making machinery. A quarry was added to Heppner's interests and in 1927 it was reported that a garage was to be built next to the factory\textsuperscript{15}.

The Sydney body building industry prospered until the late 1920s. In 1923 it was claimed that Sydney was second only to Adelaide in the production of Australian standardized motor bodies\textsuperscript{16}. Sydney possessed several flourishing firms.

\textsuperscript{13} Coach and motor body builder for Australia and New Zealand, 15 May 1920, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 15 May 1923, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 15 May 1927, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 15 May 1923, p. 25.
Steenbohms employed 400 or 500 hands and constructed the majority of Ford bodies sold in New South Wales. Garratts of Camperdown employed between 275 and 300 hands to produce 1,750 bodies annually mainly for Fiat and Overland chassis. Custom work remained profitable and Smith and Waddington were able to employ 150 hands producing made to order bodies for British and European chassis. However the prosperity of the local body builders owed much to tariff protection. In 1923 a Ford body sold at £64/10/1 in the United States while the more elaborate Studebaker body retailed at £276. Similar Australian made bodies cost £205 and £565 respectively.

Motor vehicle retailing and servicing also expanded during the 1920s. Demand for both new and used cars was high. Some used car dealers won reputations for sharp practices. It was often difficult to tell the age of a car with a custom built body and many claims of misrepresentation were heard. One dealer was alleged to have sold a 1916 model as a 1925 model. The service industry also prospered. The major innovation was the introduction of the drive in service station. One of the first was opened by Bennett and Wood in Wentworth Avenue in 1926. Suppliers of components and

17. Ibid., 15 June 1923, p. 52.
18. Ibid., p. 47.
19. Ibid., 15 July 1923, p. 66.
20. Open road, 10 October 1929, p. 3.
accessories also prospered and in October 1927 the Goodyear Tyre Company opened a factory at Granville with a staff of 400.\(^{22}\)

By the end of the 1920s American influence was becoming dominant in the motor industry and trade. Overseas manufacturers realised, with encouragement from the Australian Government, that they could escape tariffs by establishing Australian assembly plants. In 1920 Studebaker established a factory at Newtown to build standard bodies for their chassis. However it was not until 1925 when Ford decided to establish local assembly plants that the local motor trade appreciated its peril. In 1926 General Motors followed Ford's lead and established local assembly plants. The Adelaide body builders Holden contracted to supply bodies to General Motors although the original agreement left Holdens free to supply bodies to other manufacturers.

Sydney car traders felt the weight of the American invasion immediately. Ford and General Motors established their own distribution systems and dis-enfranchised established traders. Local dealers were forced to seek franchises for less popular British and European makes. Body builders also lost out on American makes but initially experienced little hardship. In April 1927 Steenbohms were said to be working to their full capacity producing bodies for British chassis.\(^{23}\)

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However in November 1927 Smith and Waddington suspended operations and retrenched their staff\(^{24}\). The firm managed to resume operations but went into liquidation in 1930. Other body builders met similar fates during the Depression.

\[\text{o - o - o}\]

The 1920s was a decade of change and growth for motorists' organisations. Whilst the formation of the National Roads and Motorists Association must be seen as the major event the Automobile Club of Australia also prospered. In 1920 the Club received the right to use the prefix 'Royal'. This was not the signal for a retreat into conservativism and when the Club was incorporated in 1925 the Memorandum of Association included provision for both lady and associate members\(^{25}\). Lady and associate members were entitled to display the associate members badge on their cars and to use the facilities provided for them by the Club. Neither class of member could vote in Club elections or hold office. In February 1928 the Roads and Tours Committee resolved that the R.A.C.A. should actively canvass for members\(^{26}\). The resolution was partly a reaction to the rapid growth of the N.R.M.A. but also reflected the necessity of increasing membership to support the elaborate Macquarie Street Clubhouse.

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24. Ibid., 15 November 1927, p. 160.


The R.A.C.A. Patrol is alert, efficient and at the service of members and associate members.
Planning for the Macquarie Street Clubhouse, still occupied by the R.A.C.A., took shape in 1923. Land on the corner of Macquarie and Albert Streets, with frontage to Circular Quay, was purchased for £25,000. H. Ruskin Rowe, a Club member, acted as honorary architect thus foregoing £5,000 in professional fees. A tender of £111,532 was accepted and construction commenced on 14 May 1926. The building was financed by the sale of the Philip Street Clubhouse for £37,500, a loan of £75,000 from the AMP Society and £600 of debentures issued to members. The Clubhouse was opened on 23 March 1928 and was free of debt by November 1944.

Professional motor sport came to the fore during the 1920s. Overland treks, especially those by Francis Birtles who drove from England to Australia in 1928, were well publicised. Inter-city record breakers such as A.V. Turner and Norman 'Wizard' Smith became popular heroes. Speedway racing thrived with the Olympia Speedway at Maroubra operating as a commercial venture between 1924 and 1934.

Although attracting less interest than the more spectacular forms of motor sport the R.A.C.A. sporting programme remained very much alive during the 1920s. Some motor racing competitors, notably Mrs. J.A.S. Jones, who raced at Maroubra, participated in R.A.C.A. events. A.V. Turner was another regular competitor. Ironically Turner died as a

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Mr. H. Ruskin Rowe, a well-known Sydney architect, in his Hudson Super-Six. This is a Sydney-built body of a type standardised by Dalgety and Co. Ltd., and very popular among motorists who require a superior appearance and finish.

Mr. Rowe is a prominent member of the Automobile Club of Australia, Sydney, and is also a member of the English Royal Automobile Club.

Australian motorist
December 1919, p. 149

H. Ruskin Rowe, architect of the Royal Automobile Club of Australia's Macquarie Street club house.
flashlight photo of Mr. Norman Smith, the holder of the Sydney–Melbourne Record, in the Essex, prior to the start.

Norman 'Wizard' Smith at the wheel.
Mr. A. V. Turner and the 25 h.p. Delage.
result of injuries suffered in an accident during an R.A.C.A. hill climb in 1926 and not in a high speed crash on the Sydney-Melbourne highway. The R.A.C.A. abandoned Melbourne-Sydney trials during the 1920s after the Victorian Automobile Club had proved indifferent to the idea. Instead Sydney-Brisbane trials, beginning in August 1921, became annual events. In 1925 a 10 day trial between Sydney and Coolangatta was organised. A notable innovation was the admission of lady competitors to Club events beginning with a one day trial in 1926 in which Mesdames J.A.S. Jones and G.H. Deaton and Miss E. Perry competed.

The R.A.C.A. expanded its role as a service organisation during the 1920s. In 1923 the Club arranged vehicle insurance for members through Lloyds of London at premiums 20% below commercial rates and with better third party cover. During the same year the Club responded to growing dissatisfaction with the enforcement of the traffic regulations by inviting members to report cases in which motorists had been unfairly treated. Such cases would be taken up with the traffic authorities but the Club stressed that it would not adopt any cases involving deliberate breaches of the regulations. In 1924 a Touring Department was established with a patrolling guide collecting information on roads and hotels, arranging tours and assisting members on the road. The activities of

the N.R.M.A.'s guides probably encouraged the Club to extend its services and by 1929 it had 8 guides equipped with 6 motor cycles and 2 small cars. Clearly the R.A.C.A. did not meekly lapse into a mere social club at the appearance of the N.R.M.A.

One R.A.C.A. service had unhappy results. During the 1920s a number of men and boys adopted the calling of 'car minders' and guarded cars parked in the street in the expectation of a tip from the owner. Car minders were widely criticised and it was alleged that any motorist who spurned their services could expect to find his car damaged on his return. In 1924 several car minders sought R.A.C.A. endorsement which the Club extended to a number of men in the hope of regulating the trade. Some car minders proved virtuous and in 1927 H. Willson and H. Lee were rewarded by the Club for assisting in the arrest of a car thief.

Overall the R.A.C.A.'s scheme was a failure. The first man endorsed was struck off the list after being fined for assault and offensive behaviour. In 1928 the Club terminated all of its endorsements and asked the Civic Commissioners to outlaw the occupation thus clearing the way for the Police to arrest anyone loitering near a parked car. The Commissioners refused to act and car minding flourished. In 1929 a motorist parking in St. James Road ignored a car

A suggested accessory for the gentlemen who want to mind your car.

*Australian motorist*

May 1925, p. 507.
minder's instructions. The car minder produced a gun, '... declared that he had used it before and would not hesitate to use it again. The motorist received such a shock that he was confined to bed for several days.'

The R.A.C.A. participated in the 'good roads' movement during the 1920s but its efforts won little admiration. In its 1920 annual report the Club recorded that it had donated £100 to the National Roads Association. Frank B. Smith, the N.R.A. Secretary attended the Club's annual meeting and challenged the claim pointing out that only £4-18-0 had been donated from Club funds while the balance had been subscribed by Club members. The R.A.C.A. acknowledged the truth of Smith's statement but his action would have done little to improve relations between the N.R.A. and the R.A.C.A. The Club's efforts in connection with the Good Roads Loan drew criticism from J.T. Lang. The R.A.C.A. urged its members to subscribe to the loan and offered to act as a collection agency so that it could maintain a record of the amounts subscribed as a result of its efforts. Nevertheless Lang cited the inactivity of the R.A.C.A. as a contributing factor to the failure of the loan.

Further embarrassment arose as a result of the Club's offer, made in June 1921, to donate £250 towards the cost of bridging Paddys River provided the Government undertook

35. Australian motorist, January 1921, p. 192.
the work. Nothing was heard until June 1922 when the Government asked the Club to contribute £500 towards a proposed bridge over the river. The Club refused to contribute towards the cost of the bridge and even withdrew its original offer. The Club was then accused of going back on its word. Thus the Club's ventures into the road agitation may be seen as unrewarding.

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Although the R.A.C.A. remained active during the 1920s it was replaced as the major representative of motorists by the National Roads and Motorists Association. The N.R.M.A. did not set out to eliminate the R.A.C.A. probably realising that the Club posed no real threat to its ambitions. In November 1923 J.C. Watson stated that

'... the automobile club was largely a social organisation ... while it was an estimable institution, it was not quite of the type that would maintain contact with the general body of motorists. There was plenty of room for the Royal Automobile Club and the association.'\(^{36}\)

Conversely the R.A.C.A. was reported to believe that the functions of the Club and the N.R.M.A. would overlap and while the Club was not hostile to the Association it would not necessarily work in conjunction with it. The Club also pointed out that earlier organisations similar to the N.R.M.A. had been shortlived\(^{37}\). In practice the two bodies coexisted

\(^{36}\) Sydney morning herald, 30 November 1923, p. 8.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
peacefully except for some open, but minor, confrontations between R.A.C.A. car minders and N.R.M.A. guides.

The N.R.M.A. quickly established itself as an aggressive, proselytising motorists' service organisation. It could be argued that the N.R.M.A. remained more of a roads than a motorists' organisation for several years but the balance gradually changed. N.R.M.A. road patrols appeared in Sydney during 1924 and during the Christmas season of that year one guide was stationed at Katoomba and another at Kangaroo Valley. Initially the patrols assisted all motorists largely as a recruiting measure. In 1927, when the Association's membership reached 30,000, service became restricted to card carrying members. Members were also warned that patrols would no longer respond to '... frivolous calls such as for help in changing a tyre or the putting up of a hood. But in the case of lady members we extend considerable latitude.' By 1929 there were 53 guides on the N.R.M.A.'s payroll and a road patrol depot had been established at 166 George Street North.

Official N.R.M.A. garages were appointed to supplement the work of the patrols. The Association advised its members that the official garages offered reasonably priced work executed by qualified mechanics. In 1927 the N.R.M.A. began contracting with local service stations to provide road service to members in areas where guides did not operate.

39. Ibid., 24 September 1927, p. 12.
The Retailers and Garages Section of the Motor Traders Association protested:

'... that it was against the interests of a large majority of members of this section that the N.M.R.A. should appoint official garages who may have no outstanding qualifications and the section will ask the Council to take the matter up officially with the N.R.M.A.'

Nevertheless the N.R.M.A. persisted and in 1929 announced that 185,000 square miles of the state were covered by N.R.M.A. road service leaving only 40,000 square miles outside the Western Division unserviced.

Additional services were offered by the N.R.M.A.'s Technical Department which began operating on 1 January 1925. Members could obtain free advice on vehicle equipment and accessories and consult the Department's list of reputable used car dealers. The Department's engineer would inspect used cars and give an opinion on the fairness of the price for a fee of £2-2-0. Inspections of repair work and valuations for insurance purposes cost £1-1-0. The Department also established a system of examining and registering mechanics. James Nagle, Superintendent of Sydney Technical College, offered the facilities of the College for the examinations and suggested that H.J. Swann, lecturer in charge of the Mechanical Engineering Department at the College and an N.R.M.A. member, should serve on the board of examiners.

41. Open Road, 25 March 1929, p. 13.
42. Daily Telegraph, 21 March 1925, p. 15.
The first examination for the N.R.M.A.'s mechanics certificate was held on 11 November 1925. Naturally garages aspiring to a place on the N.R.M.A.'s list of garages were expected to employ N.R.M.A. certificated mechanics.

The N.R.M.A. followed the R.A.C.A. 's example in establishing a Legal Department. The Department undertook work related to accidents, claims for damages, disputes over sales or purchases of vehicles, hire purchase deals, disputed insurance claims and repair accounts. The Department also provided legal representation for members in motoring cases.

Insurance was another N.R.M.A. enterprise. Initially the N.R.M.A. negotiated concessions with commercial companies but in 1925 the N.R.M.A. Insurance Ltd was formed. The Company was floated by the issue of seven £1 shares to seven individuals, who acted as trustees under the Companies Act, and financed through a bank overdraft guaranteed by 20 individuals. N.R.M.A. Insurance, which opened for business on 25 May 1925, was nominally autonomous. However its Directors, J.C. Watson, G.R.W. McDonald, James McMahon, E.H. Cowdrey and G.N. King, were all N.R.M.A. Councillors ensuring uniformity of policy between the Company and the association. N.R.M.A. Insurance's rates, ranging from £7-16-0 for £100 cover to £20-16-0 for £1,000 cover, were about 20% below commercial rates and included unlimited third party cover. In 1926 the Company diversified its

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43. Good roads, 15 June 1925, p. 43.
interests by offering a comprehensive household policy. N.R.M.A. Insurance gained immediate success and in 1926 the loan guarantees were cancelled. On 21 June 1926 the Company went into liquidation. Its assets and liabilities were taken over by a new company which was limited by guarantee and which had no shareholders. At 30 June 1929 21,300 N.R.M.A. insurance policies were in force.

The Touring Department, established in 1924, provided information on roads, hotels and camping sites. In 1929 a subsidiary Touring Club was formed in response to requests by members to organise technical lectures, entertainments and outings. In 1926 the N.R.M.A.'s objectives were expanded to allow it to own property. The Association wished to own its headquarters and to establish camping grounds. It was also suggested that a country club should be established. The country club did not eventuate but several camp sites were established. One camp site at Shellharbour gloried in the name Watsonia. Another site was established at Lake Macquarie. These two sites became the subject of a scandal when it was revealed that they had been purchased at prices almost triple their valuations.

The N.R.M.A. appointed Sir George Mason Allard, a public accountant, to investigate the purchases. Allard reported that no one in the N.R.M.A. profited from the transactions. However he criticised the failure to obtain valuations

44. Open road, 21 November 1929, p. 3.
and asserted that the state of the Association's finances at the time had not warranted the expenditure. It also emerged that N.R.M.A. Insurance had purchased the sites on behalf of the N.R.M.A. before the latter's objectives had been amended to allow it to own property. The ingenuity of this procedure sits strangely with the lack of business acumen evident in the failure to obtain independent valuations prior to purchasing the camp sites.

The N.R.M.A. made vigorous efforts to increase its membership. The advantages of membership were emphasised in the Association's journal Good roads which was renamed the Open road with the issue of 25 June 1927. Editorial comment on the change of title explained that Good roads had been printed by Shipping Newspapers Ltd. and that the proprietor of that company had been able to exercise some influence over editorial policy. Readers were assured that the Open road was entirely under N.R.M.A. control and that editorial policy was free of outside influence. Whatever the significance of the change N.R.M.A. membership certainly increased. In 1924 the Association had 550 members but in 1929 there were 47,293 members including 20,249 country members. In 1928 the Open road published a list of 'notable' N.R.M.A. members which included T.R. Bavin, B.S.B. Stevens, Sir Philip Street C.J., Sir James Fairfax, Sir Samuel Hordern, Rt. Hon. Charles Howard, Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, then resident in the

45. Ibid., 25 September 1928, pp. 18-19.
46. Ibid., 25 July 1927, p. 36.
Northern Rivers district, W.M. Hughes, Ethel Turner, Mrs. J.T. Lang and Superintendent Turbett and Inspector Bennett of the Police Traffic Branch\textsuperscript{47}.

As the N.R.M.A. grew attempts were made to find more effective administrative structures. In 1925 it was decided to establish a branch in any centre which could muster 1,000 members and support a guide. The first branch was established at Newcastle before the end of 1925. In 1926 district committees were established and a country organiser appointed. However the process of decentralisation was reversed in 1928 when the district committees were abolished and country areas were given a representative on the N.R.M.A. council. Some country people protested but the Council asserted that the N.R.M.A. was a state-wide body which must be controlled as a single entity from Sydney\textsuperscript{48}.

Centralisation was increased in 1929 by the creation of a Board of Management. Members were asked to vote on a proposal to establish a Board consisting of a chairman, who would be paid £3-3-0 per meeting to an annual maximum of £200, and four other members who would receive £2-2-0 per meeting to an annual maximum of £150. The Board would become the executive arm of the Association but would be answerable to the Council which would remain the supreme policy making body.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 25 May 1928, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 25 April 1928, p. 37.
J.C. Watson led the movement in favour of the establishment of a board of management. Watson argued that the Council was too large to act effectively as an executive body. He added that the attendance of unpaid councillors could not be guaranteed. Watson claimed that only a small board of paid members could give the Association the efficient business management it needed. R.V. Hodgson, later President of the R.A.C.A., objected that the Association's salaried staff could handle the N.R.M.A.'s business under the Council's direction and that paid directors could become more interested in retaining their positions than in promoting the interests of the N.R.M.A. Hodgson also feared that the N.R.M.A. would lose prestige and respect if it surrendered its affairs to an inner group of mercenary administrators. Watson replied that the N.R.M.A. was already a large business and the more business like its methods the better. Watson's view prevailed as members voted to establish the board.

The Council subsequently elected Watson, A.E. Rudder, James McMahon, G.N. King and A.M. Graham, representing country interests, to the Board. Watson, McMahon and King were also members of the board of N.R.M.A. Insurance suggesting that real power in the N.R.M.A. belonged to a few men. Clearly the day of the well intentioned amateur had passed. Men of business were fully in control and determined to give purpose and direction to the Association's affairs.

49. Ibid., 25 July 1929, p. 12.
50. Ibid., p. 13.
Commenting on the N.R.M.A.'s political attitude Watson asserted that '... we take no hand in party politics but we are unmistakeably up against anybody, regardless of his political complexion who steals the motorists road money.'\textsuperscript{51} In practice the N.R.M.A. found itself 'up against' the Labor Party more often than the Nationalists. Since motorists belonged to the wealthier sections of the community this may be regarded as predictable. However some of Labor's policies, including Lang's 'raid' on the Main Roads Fund, were hardly calculated to win the support of motorists. The N.R.M.A. did not blindly accept the Nationalist's policies or good intentions. During the 1927 election campaign the N.R.M.A. openly opposed the return of the Lang Government. However Watson asked all candidates to declare their views on the road question. Bavin condemned this impertinence asserting that Nationalist candidates were bound by their Party's platform and could not make subsidiary promises to the N.R.M.A.\textsuperscript{52}. The N.R.M.A. accepted the rebuff and continued to support the Nationalists on the grounds that their roads policy was preferable to Lang's.

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As the number of vehicles on New South Wales roads increased during the 1920s traffic control became more difficult and the road accident rate spiralled (see Table 11). Dr. Richard Arthur M.L.A. who, in 1920, had claimed that motor traffic was '... devastating the streets of Sydney}

\textsuperscript{51. Ibid., 24 September 1927, p. 12.}

\textsuperscript{52. Daily telegraph, 19 August 1927, p. 4.}
**TABLE 11**

Traffic Accidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Metropolitan Traffic District</th>
<th>Balance of State - Motor Accidents only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motor Accidents</td>
<td>All Traffic Accidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accidents Reported</td>
<td>Killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>2,877</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>11,691</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>17,359</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and killing people\textsuperscript{53} felt moved in 1927 to describe the motor accident rate as 'wholesale murder'\textsuperscript{54}. Admittedly Arthur held extreme views on motoring, and on many other issues, but the rising accident rate gave general cause for concern.

During the 1920s criticism of motorists tended to regain the intensity of the 1900s. The term 'scorcher' had fallen into disuse but the epithet 'road hog' was widely used. 'Road hogs' were held to be guilty of every irresponsible or dangerous driving practice. Drunken driving came in for special censure. The Motor Traffic Act had made it an offence to drive a vehicle whilst under the influence of alcohol but it was not until the 1920s, when increasing traffic congestion made the consequences more obvious, that drunken driving attracted wide condemnation.

Motorists organisations were aware of the road safety problem. In 1927 the R.A.C.A. asked the Minister for Education to appoint a fully qualified officer to instruct school children in road safety. The Under Secretary replied that safety instruction was already included in the civics syllabus and that the Department would not appoint a special officer\textsuperscript{55}. However he promised that any literature or posters produced by the Club would be accepted for use in schools\textsuperscript{56}. The R.A.C.A. produced several books and posters

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{53} N.S.W. Parliament \underline{Debates}, 27 September 1920, Vol. 83, p. 715.
  \item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 1 February 1927, Vol. 109, p. 760.
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Motor in Australia, October 1927, p. 11.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., December 1927, p. 22.
\end{itemize}
on road safety and a number of slides and films which were screened in commercial cinemas\textsuperscript{57}.

The N.R.M.A. also attempted to promote road safety. The Open road frequently featured safety issues. During 1928 the Association announced that any 'irrefutable evidence' it received concerning the activities of road hogs would be conveyed to the Police\textsuperscript{58}. A Safety Department was established to coordinate the safety work of the Association. The 'Golden Book of Motoring', a register of motorists and others who had proven themselves worthy of the high regard of motorists, was another innovation. In addition the N.R.M.A.'s first Safety Week was held between 20 and 26 October 1929.

The police remained responsible for the formulation and enforcement of traffic regulations during the 1920s but their role was seriously questioned. Local government resentment lingered on and the Local Government Association Conference of 1927 resolved that the Motor Traffic Act should be amended to allow local councils to impose and enforce speed limits\textsuperscript{59}.

More serious criticism came from the Traffic Advisory Committee, consisting of J.C. Watson, former Traffic Superintendent Alfred Edward, and business man R.B. Orchard, with public servant Sydney Aubrey Maddocks as Secretary and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 29 October 1927, p. 35.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 10 May 1928, p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{59} \textit{Sydney morning herald}, 20 October 1927, p. 12.
\end{itemize}
Executive Member, which reported in 1928. The Committee expressed the view that:

In no other country of the size and importance of New South Wales is so little attempt made to study traffic problems.  

The report also revealed that the Commissioner of Police had testified that

... his men do not claim to possess the technical training, even if they had the time, to deal with the larger phases of traffic investigation or the study and application of measures found necessary in other parts of the world.

The Committee suggested that a Ministry of Transport should be established together with a permanent Traffic Advisory Committee to advise the Minister on traffic control and regulation.

Following publication of the report it was stated that the Chief Secretary, A. Bruntnell, would ask Cabinet to consider replacing the traffic police with a new force attached to the proposed Ministry of Transport. The new force would be empowered to control traffic but recruits would not be required to meet the same physical standards as police recruits. However no radical changes to transport legislation occurred until 1930.

61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 11.
63. Daily Telegraph, 16 May 1928, p. 5.
In fairness to the Police it must be said that the Department's resources were not increased in a realistic manner. In 1922 Traffic Superintendent Brack complained that '... the Police Force is woefully short of men to accomplish all the work required of it.'\textsuperscript{64} Of course the diligent department head makes the strongest possible case for extra resources but facts suggest that Brack had cause for complaint. Between 1920 and 1929 the number of motor vehicles in New South Wales increased from 35,433 to 243,298. In 1920 70 arrests were made and 2,183 summonses were issued in connection with traffic offences. In 1929 1,028 arrests were made and 21,677 summonses were issued. The number of Traffic Police was increased from 116 in 1919 to 199 in 1925. The number of vehicles in the state increased from 33,339 in 1919 to 120,987 in 1925. However only 10 additional Traffic Police were appointed between 1925 and 1929 while the vehicle population more than doubled to 243,298.

The Police fared somewhat better on the question of motor vehicles. The number of Police vehicles increased from 30 in 1920 to 189 in 1929. The Public Safety Bureau was formed in 1925 to concentrate on apprehending offending motorists. In 1930 the Motor Squad was formed to investigate all classes of offences involving motor vehicles. The work of the Squad ranged from investigating car thefts and

\textsuperscript{64} Traffic Superintendent to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, August 1922. N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department, correspondence received 1922. A.O. ref 9/48 no. B8205.
fraudulent transactions involving motor vehicles to tracing hit and run drivers.\textsuperscript{65} The need to equip the Police with modern high powered cars was recognised by 1925.

Despite their increasing work load the Police attempted to maintain firm but reasonable control over traffic. Official statements acknowledged the magnitude of the problem but avoided any hint of panic. In 1922 a report on traffic facilities in the metropolitan area pointed out that the ratio of fatalities to population was about 1 to 40,000 and concluded that:

\ldots{} the only inference which can be drawn from the figures is that the vast majority of drivers cannot be classed as reckless. Nor does it follow that all persons convicted of speedy driving are reckless either.\textsuperscript{66}

Even in 1928 Inspector General James Mitchell stated that '... the motorists of Sydney are a wonderfully law abiding class' and that most breaches of the regulations were due to 'unavoidable ignorance'.\textsuperscript{67} Such pronouncements were interspersed with vigorous enforcement campaigns. During special campaigns police were transferred from other districts to reinforce the metropolitan traffic police. In addition motorists convicted of driving whilst under the influence of alcohol were '... invariably asked to show cause why their licences should not be cancelled.'\textsuperscript{68}


\textsuperscript{66} N.S.W. Parliament Debates, 22 August 1922, Vol. 88, p. 1397

\textsuperscript{67} Daily telegraph, 4 May 1928, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{68} N.S.W. Police Department Annual report, 1920, p. 5.
Magistrates were criticised in some quarters for being too lenient towards traffic offenders. In 1922 the Chief Secretary, C.W. Oakes, admitted that maximum penalties were rarely imposed. Only very occasionally were fines supplemented by 14 or 28 day suspensions of driving licences. In October 1923 Judge Cohen showed a remarkable willingness to consider the motorist's point of view when hearing an appeal by Boyd Edkins against a conviction for driving to the danger of the public. The Judge agreed to ride with Edkins over the same route at the same speed and afterwards quashed the conviction. Such decisions would not have pleased the critics. Labor Chief Secretary C.C. Lazzarini complained, in 1925, that '... it appears to me that there are magistrates who have no appreciation whatever of the value of the lives and limbs of the people, as time after time they inflict ridiculously low penalties.' Later in the year Dr. Arthur complained about the '... trivial sentences which are being imposed by magistrates upon drunken and careless drivers ...' The Minister for Justice, W.J. McKell, replied

I do not know that hon. members are altogether fair in casting reflections upon magistrates without being acquainted with the whole of the facts. I have not had brought under my notice any specific instance of a magistrate not doing his duty to the public.

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70. Motor in Australia, January 1924, p. 12.


73. Ibid.
Few motorists would have accepted that either the Police or the Magistrates erred on the side of lenience. In 1928 the *Open road* claimed that 'There is an abundance of evidence to support the suggestion that many police officers regard traffic prosecutions as an end in themselves ...' and complained that motorists were being harrassed by the police. The widely used charge 'driving to the danger of the public' was criticised as being vague and open to almost any interpretation. Magistrates were criticised for being too ready to accept police evidence and for regarding motorists' defences as irritating delays.

On 6 August 1926 a joint N.R.M.A.-R.A.C.A. deputation placed a number of grievances before Chief Secretary Lazzarini and requested several innovations. The deputation called for the establishment of a separate traffic court presided over by a magistrate with wide motoring experience. In addition the deputation requested that all contested traffic cases which decided important principles and all appeal cases should be widely reported for the guidance of the Police and the public. The deputation asked that a copy of the police report be enclosed with summonses so motorists could know the exact nature of the charges and that the report should be the only evidence taken if the motorist pleaded guilty. A new idea put forward was the appointment of a registrar, to be on duty

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during office hours, to determine penalties in minor cases in which the motorist pleaded guilty. Lazzarini expressed interest in the deputation's ideas, willing, no doubt, to consider any measures which might alleviate the growing burden of traffic cases on the ordinary courts. A separate Traffic Court was established before the end of 1926.

A number of new measures were introduced during the 1920s in an effort to establish more effective traffic control. Faith in strict speed limits waned in official circles. In 1922 Traffic Superintendent Brack reported that

The Police Force are honestly and fairly striving to administer the traffic laws within the limits of their strength, but to take merely technical breaches to court would simply be looked upon as unreasonable and consequently they carry out a much more satisfactory role of proceeding against any known offender for driving at a speed dangerous to the public. 76 (Brack's emphasis)

The declining faith in statutory speed limits arose partly from the fact that the Police had found it difficult to prove exact speeds in court. In addition it was felt that speeds which were technically legal could be dangerous in certain circumstances and that the law should provide for prosecution in such cases.

In 1924 Brack reported that in 1922 a British Departmental Committee had reported that Britain's 20 m.p.h.

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76. Traffic Superintendent to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, August 1922. N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department correspondence received 1922. A.O. ref 9/48 no. 8205.
limit had been rendered unenforceable by general public opinion and concluded that

... the maximum speed limit should be abolished and that the public would be more effectively protected and less irritation caused to careful motorists by the rigid enforcement of the regulations as to DANGEROUS DRIVING. (Brack's emphasis) 77

Some New South Wales limits, such as that of 15 m.p.h. within four miles of the G.P.O., were probably just as unenforceable as the British limit had been. Support for Brack's views came from a Conference of the Heads of the various Australian state traffic branches which recommended the abolition of speed limits, except those needed to protect road surfaces, provided adequate power was given to enforce the laws prohibiting dangerous driving 78. New South Wales' speed limits were repealed in 1925 79. The abolition was duplicated in the British Road Traffic Act of 1929 80. In neither case did the number of road accidents decline.

While speed limits were repealed some other matters came under regulation. In 1921 a new regulation required a driver who intended to stop or to turn to "... raise his hand or give some intelligible signal of such his

77. Traffic Superintendent to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, 20 October 1924. N.S.W. Chief Secretary's Department, correspondence received A.O. B5309.


79. N.S.W. Government Gazette, 10 July 1925, p. 3029

80. Plowden, op. cit., pp. 252-266.
intention so that the same may be visible to any person immediately following. In 1924 uniform hand signals were prescribed. Brake lights became an acceptable substitute for a stop signal given with the hand in 1928.

The contribution of parked vehicles to traffic congestion attracted increasing concern during the 1920s. In 1924 the Lord Mayor advised the City Council Finance Committee that garages could be built in the underground railway excavations in Hyde and Wynyard Parks without affecting the railway or the restoration of the parks. The Mayor claimed that off street parking could be provided for 900 cars at a cost of £185,000 and that parking fees and petrol sales would yield a weekly profit of £420. The scheme was not adopted. Later plans for council car parks at the Domain and in The Goldsborough Mort building at Circular Quay met a similar fate.

Meanwhile the State Government had defined its attitude to the parking problem. In 1926 Lazzarini stated that in his opinion the provision of parking facilities was a matter for private enterprise. Official action was confined to the introduction of parking restrictions. In 1924 the

81. N.S.W. Government Gazette, 29 April 1921, p. 2573.
82. Ibid., 7 March 1924, p. 1443.
83. Ibid., 6 July 1928, p. 3114.
85. Ibid., 16 April 1926, p. 1.
police were instructed to report any vehicle left standing in the central city area for more than 30 minutes\textsuperscript{86}. In 1925 parking was prohibited in busy streets such as George, Pitt and Castlereagh between 8-30 and 9-30 a.m. and between 4-30 and 6-30 p.m.\textsuperscript{87}.

In a further effort to ease traffic congestion the Government announced, in 1924, that kerbside petrol pumps would be banned from the city\textsuperscript{88}. Garage proprietors protested that the profits from petrol sales were insufficient to finance the construction of elaborate driveway service stations. According to the proprietors their only alternative was to move the pumps inside their garages. Customers would have to drive into the garage and then reverse out into the stream of traffic. The N.R.M.A. favoured the retention of kerbside pumps.

In January 1925 the Mayor of North Sydney, C.W. Watt, asked Chief Secretary Oakes whether the police or the Council had the final say on the erection of kerbside pumps. Twice the police had objected to permits issued by North Sydney Council. Oakes replied that the police were responsible for traffic control and could prosecute the proprietor of any pumps which they considered obstructions to traffic. Oakes undertook to confer with the Police\textsuperscript{89}. Oakes

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 9 July 1924, p. 9.
\item Ibid., 6 February 1925, p. 1.
\item Ibid., 26 July 1924, p. 6.
\item Ibid., 9 January 1925, p. 6.
\end{enumerate}
ultimately decreed that no new pumps could be erected in the metropolitan area. The police could prosecute the proprietors of pumps causing obstruction. However outside the metropolitan area the local councils had the final say.\textsuperscript{90}

By the late 1920s radical changes were being considered. Modern inventions, notably electric traffic signals, were attracting both interest and suspicion. In 1927 Lazzarini introduced a Transport Bill primarily intended to establish coordination between bus, tram and train services. The Bill also included harsher penalties for drunken driving. The maximum penalty would increase from £20 to £50 or one month's imprisonment without the option of a fine. Lazzarini announced that he hoped to introduce a comprehensive new traffic bill during the next Parliamentary session.\textsuperscript{91} However the Lang Government was defeated at the 1927 election and Lazzarini was unable to proceed with his plan.

The Bavin Government showed its concern over traffic matters by appointing the Traffic Advisory Committee in 1928. By this time governments were paying more attention to regulating commercial motor vehicles. As economic conditions deteriorated the impact of motor competition on public transport revenue became critical. The road safety issue attracted less attention until the mid 1930s.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 28 March 1925, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{91} N.S.W. Parliament Debates, 20 January 1927, Vol. 109, p. 573.
The question of car ownership was examined during the 1920s. Car purchasers received neither deed nor title and registration of a vehicle in the name of an individual was accepted as proof of ownership. This system was open to abuse. In 1923 the Motor Traders Association asked the Government to issue registration certificates indicating ownership. In addition the Association asked that all hire purchase agreements be registered to prevent the sale of cars still under hire purchase as unencumbered property. The Chief Secretary replied that the Police were considering the problem.

The illegal use and theft of motor vehicles also caused concern. Joy riding was not uncommon and many missing vehicles were eventually found. In 1924 the Police recovered 570 of the 572 cars reported stolen and in 1925 350 out of 358 cars reported stolen were located. The Police stated that a number of the missing vehicles had been taken by members of the underworld who used them to travel to parties or other social functions and then abandoned them. However reports circulated that a few cars had been stolen, renovated and resold or used as hire cars.

A court ruling in 1922 incensed motorists. Judge Scholes ruled that a young man who claimed that he had

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93. Ibid., November 1923, p. 11.
94. Australian motorist, February 1926, p. 337.
intended to return a car which he had taken without the owner's consent could not be held to have stolen the car. The case was one of illegal use. In 1924 an R.A.C.A. deputation revived the request for an amendment of the Crimes Act to give motor owners the same protection as owners of livestock against illegal use of their property. The Crimes Act was subsequently amended making illegal use of a motor vehicle punishable by up to three years imprisonment.

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The 1920s was a decade of expansion and progress for motoring in New South Wales. With the emergence of the N.R.M.A. motorists gained a strong and determined champion. The establishment of the Main Roads Board ensured that roads would gradually be improved to motor age standards. Unfortunately the negative aspects of motor traffic, especially accidents and congestion, became all too apparent. Official action had been foreshadowed and tighter restrictions on motoring were in the offing.
CHAPTER 5: THE RISE AND REGULATION OF COMMERCIAL MOTOR TRANSPORT

By the end of the 1920s motor vehicles had become a significant factor in the New South Wales transport industry. The expansion of motor services was welcomed by some especially in areas where neither tram nor train operated. However the inadequacies of the system of regulating motor transport quickly became apparent. Complaints were soon heard concerning road safety and the destruction of road surfaces by heavy commercial vehicles. In addition the revenues of the state owned tram and train services began to suffer as a result of motor competition. No government, regardless of its political persuasion, could allow the public transport system to operate at huge losses. With the onset of the Depression the need to regulate motor transport and protect the public transport system became acute. While the form of the regulation gave rise to bitter political debate by 1933 it was clear that motor transport would be regulated in future regardless of which party was in power.

Motor vehicles largely displaced the horse in Sydney's carrying trade and in bus and taxi services during the 1920s. Apparently the horse still commanded attention because in 1926 a motorist was fined £1 for taking water from a horse trough. Answering a question in Parliament Chief Secretary Lazzarini explained that the motorist had been prosecuted because the water had been taken in a greasy tin and that this practice constituted cruelty to the many horses still working around Sydney. Lazzarini added that motorists should
patronise the many garages operating to meet their needs instead of taking water provided for horses\(^1\). Nevertheless the number of horses in the metropolitan area decreased by almost 43\% from 43,655 in 1919 to 24,954 in 1929\(^2\). The decline of horse traction is illustrated by Table 12. No horse buses were registered after 1924 and in 1929 horse vehicles accounted for only 5.2\% of Sydney's cabs and 7.4\% of the city's vans.

Buses attracted more attention than other commercial motor vehicles during the 1920s. Some bus services supplemented tram and train services with the buses which operated after the railed services had closed down for the night proving popular. Buses were also used to establish some new routes. F.H. Stewart purchased and subdivided land at Chullora but failed to persuade the government to provide tram or train services to the area. Stewart established his own bus service between Chullora and Enfield\(^3\). By 1923 Stewart had become one of the major bus operators in Sydney.

Bus services which competed against the trams caused most concern. In 1919 W.H. Bourne established a non competing service from Drummoyne Public School to Central Railway. In 1920, allegedly in response to requests from Drummoyne residents, Bourne began a service from Drummoyne

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Manly to Freshwater 'Bus.
Bus on Manly Route.

Australian motorist
July 1920, p. 459
### TABLE 12
Registrations Under the Metropolitan Traffic Act*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Horse Cabs</th>
<th>Motor Cabs</th>
<th>Horse Vans</th>
<th>Motor Vans</th>
<th>Horse Bus</th>
<th>Motor Bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>1,627</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>1,623</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>1,520</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>1,461</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>1,519</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>2,016</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,173</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>2,124</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1,364</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>2,274</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N.S.W. Police Department Annual Reports, 1920-1929.*
Bondi to Railway Service.
Post Office to Market Street in direct competition with the tram service. Bourne's bus travelled to Market Street in 20 minutes less than the tram. In 1922 Bourne took over a route between Drummoyne and Five Dock which connected with another bus service to Croydon Station. More local requests persuaded Bourne to establish a service from Gladesville to Market Street.\(^4\)

Motor transport also expanded in country areas. The number of trucks in New South Wales increased from 2,901 in 1920 to 42,594 in 1929. However separate statistics are not available for country areas. Some doubted the importance of trucks in country areas. In 1930 S.L. Cole M.L.C., himself a master carrier, estimated that 70% of transport in country areas was still provided by horses.\(^5\) Nevertheless the number of horses outside the metropolitan area declined from 618,508 in 1920 to 542,426 in 1929. The New South Wales Yearbook of 1926 suggested that the decline was '... probably owing to an increased use of motor transport.'\(^6\) Two years later the Statistician was in no doubt and explained that

There was a great advance in horse breeding between 1910 and 1918, owing to the increased demand which arose as a consequence of widening settlement, prosperous seasons and defence requirements. During the lengthy drought which terminated in June, 1920, the numbers declined heavily and the decline has continued owing to the increased use of motors for transport.\(^7\)

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The decline in the number of horses was not uniform throughout the State. Between 1919 and 1928 the number of horses in the Western Division declined by 30.3%, in the Central Plain and Riverina the decline was 28.6% and in the Coastal area and on the Tablelands the decline was 26.5% and 24% respectively. On the Western Slopes the decline was only 6.31%. Nor was the decline uniform for all classes of horses. The number of draught horses actually increased from 260,536 in 1913 to 263,348 in 1924. Conversely the number of light and saddle horses decreased from 305,414 in 1913 to 261,264 in 1924. This suggests that while motor vehicles became increasingly important in passenger and light freight carriage horses retained a significant role in heavy haulage and farm work.

While some country people retained reservations about motor transport its advantages had been well demonstrated by 1929. In 1928 it was estimated that between 70% and 80% of the New South Wales wool clip was carried to the railway by truck. Motor trucks carried smaller loads than horses or bullock waggons but could make more trips in the same time thus enabling them to carry more overall.

Trucks also began to compete with the railways over longer hauls. In 1922 Bathurst store keepers were said to prefer road transport because freight arrived from Sydney

8. Dunlop Rubber Company, Motoring and cycling notes, 12 January 1929, p. 3.
within two days whereas rail freight took two weeks\(^9\). W. Fleming, who operated a motor freight service between Sydney and Dubbo via Orange, charged 2/9 or 3/- per 56 lbs for the 156 road miles between Sydney and Orange and 3/7 for the 251 road miles to Dubbo. The railway charged 2/11 or 3/6 for the 200 rail miles between Sydney and Orange and 3/6 or 4/- for the 287 rail miles between Sydney and Dubbo\(^10\). Fleming also delivered to the consignee in the country whereas rail freight had to be collected. In addition it was claimed that rail freight was stockpiled until a full train could be made up and was delayed while goods trains waited on sidings yielding way to passenger and express trains. Even so Fleming's service illustrated the railwayman's constant complaint that motor carriers used state built roads, many of which offered shorter and more direct routes, to undercut the state owned rail services.

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Commercial motor transport was criticised on several grounds during the 1920s. Some bus drivers were criticised for their recklessness. In 1923 F.B. Smith, National Roads Association Secretary, called for stricter regulation of buses which, he claimed,

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ruled as well as ruined the roads .... They turned aside for none, and if a car or individual got in the road, the bus simply charged at the obstacle, which had to get out of the way smartly unless it sought destruction.\footnote{11}

In 1931 the Road Transport Commissioner reported that taxis - buses '... were often driven in a dangerous manner ...'\footnote{12} Apart from bus drivers, bus crews drew criticism. It was alleged that some bus proprietors employed boys as conductors. Local governments shared the concern over the impact of commercial motor vehicles on the roads. There is little doubt that road improvements made during the 1920s encouraged the expansion of motor transport. The Local Government Department surveyed traffic using Parramatta Road before its reconstruction and again in November 1922 and found that light motor vehicle traffic had increased by 632% while heavy motor traffic had increased by 1,598%. Overall horse drawn traffic decreased by 45% but heavy horse drawn traffic increased by 68%\footnote{13}. The Department concluded that 'This is remarkable testimony to the value of good roads.'\footnote{14}

While local governments may have appreciated the value of good roads they believed that commercial motor operators should carry a fair share of the costs of construction and maintenance. In 1922 several urban councils formed a deputation to ask the Minister for Local Government,

\footnote{11. Good roads, 16 April 1923, p. 12.}
\footnote{12. N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report 1930-1931, p. 18.}
\footnote{13. N.S.W. Local Government Department Report 1922-1923, p. 27.}
\footnote{14. Ibid., p. 28.}
J.C.L. Fitzpatrick, to impose a special road maintenance tax on private buses to compensate the councils for roads damaged by buses\textsuperscript{15}. The Local Government Association Conference of 1922 repeated the call for a road maintenance tax on buses\textsuperscript{16}. In 1923 a conference of councils from Sydney's eastern suburbs, where buses were particularly active, agreed that while buses provided an essential service they also damaged the roads and private property through excessive vibration. The councils called for the regulation of the weight and speed of buses and the compulsory fitting of pneumatic tyres\textsuperscript{17}. Sydney City Council joined the movement and convened a traffic conference which was attended by representatives of the Police, local government, tramway employees, bus and car owners and the Railway Commissioners. The Conference considered many conflicting proposals and failed to reach any firm conclusions. However bus interests were, no doubt, encouraged to find the conference considering a proposal that the trams should terminate outside the city proper and that buses should operate between the tram termini and the city centre\textsuperscript{18}.

The shire councils were less interested than urban councils in the impact of motor transport on the roads. This may have been because the Main Roads Board had already taken

\textsuperscript{15} Motor Traders Association \textit{Journal}, 15 August 1922, p. 77.

\textsuperscript{16} Daily telegraph, 21 September 1922, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{17} Motor Traders Association \textit{Journal}, 15 January 1923, p. 46.

responsibility for country main roads by the time truck traffic became significant. However the shire councils were aware of the impact of motor transport on the rail services. Country people realised that motor vehicles could carry some classes of freight cheaper and faster than the trains could. Still it was certain that the heavily subsidized rail services would remain the cheapest, and probably the only, carrier of bulky crops and commodities in rural areas. In December 1929 the President of the Shires Association produced a report recommending that all transport services should be coordinated in order to ensure the viability of the railways\textsuperscript{19}. The Shires Association Conference of 1930 resolved that a penal tax should be imposed on trucks carrying goods further than 20 miles in competition with the trains\textsuperscript{20}.

Tramway and railway employees shared the anxiety over the impact of motor transport on the public transport system. In 1922 a deputation of tramway employees complained to the Railway Commissioners that buses were racing trams to stopping places where they picked up potential tram passengers and obstructed the trams. The deputation added that conductors feared that they might be knocked from their running boards by buses passing close to trams in congested city streets\textsuperscript{21}. Bus men replied that tramway employees were not blameless and alleged that not only did tram drivers obstruct buses but would cause collisions if this could be done without damaging the tram or its driver's reputation\textsuperscript{22}. Fierce competition developed

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 43.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 44.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 20 January 1922, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 11 April 1923, p. 8.
between tram and bus drivers. In 1923 a correspondent to the Daily telegraph recorded that a tram and a bus had joined in a race from Drummoyne. The race gave rise to an altercation which the bus driver terminated by punching the tram driver between the eyes\textsuperscript{23}. Even if such outright violence was rare unregulated competition was hardly in the interests of public safety.

Railway employees mounted their own protests. In 1923 railway employees at Bathurst warned local shopkeepers that they may find themselves boycotted if they patronised motor transport at the expense of the railways\textsuperscript{24}. The Australian motorist alleged that the Railway management had orchestrated the outburst but failed to document the charge. In fact railway employees were concerned on their own account and in 1929 formed a Railway Transport Protection Association to combat motor transport and protect their jobs\textsuperscript{25}.

The Railway Commissioners, responsible for both the trams and trains until 1930, were aware of the road transport challenge. The Commissioners emphasised that, being bound by government regulations and the conditions applying to government employees, they could not compete on equal terms with bus proprietors. In 1922 Tramway Superintendent E. Doran claimed that bus operators employed cheap non union

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 10 April 1923, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{24} Australian motorist, November 1923, p. 122.

\textsuperscript{25} Daily telegraph, 13 May 1929, p. 17.
labour and that if tramway regulations were applied to buses the two man buses would need crews of five. The Commissioners also pointed out that the public service duties of the trams and trains affected their profitability.

The Commissioners report for 1928 detailed their problems. Although railway revenue increased from £13,083,847 in 1919/20 to £19,029,519 in 1927/28 the service's deficit expanded from £129,125 to £1,609,267. The Commissioners identified several causes including non-paying lines, which cost £1,553,626 in 1927/28, heavy loan repayment commitments, interest paid increased from £3,641,988 in 1919/20 to £5,882,452 in 1927/28, and working expenses which increased from £9,570,984 in 1919/20 to £14,756,327 in 1927/28 due to higher wages and the introduction of the 44 hour week. With respect to motor competition the Commissioners stated:

Motor vehicles can compete with the railways for the cream of the traffic under extremely favourable conditions extended to these services today ... while paying only a part of the cost and upkeep of the very costly roadways needed for its actual existence, and every safety appliance governing its movement is at the direct cost of people to whom no compensatory service is rendered.

The Commissioners acknowledged that motor transport could severely reduce railway profitability adding:

26. Ibid., 29 January 1923, p. 4.
28. Ibid.
Tram and Railroad Authorities' Nightmare.

Reproduced by courtesy "Sydney Daily Telegraph."

Australian motorist
January 1924, p. 274
Reproduced by courtesy
Sydney Daily telegraph
It is, however, quite impossible for ... [motor] vehicles to do more than a fraction of the total tonnage transport of the State except at rates which would kill all industries, and before this illogically nursed competition has so gravely affected the earning powers of the railways that resultant losses in operation have become so heavy as to be a grievous burden to the State taxpayers, very special consideration should be given by the Government to the equity of the present conditions. 29

Road transport operators defended their position by blaming the Railway Commissioners problems on inefficiency and featherbedding within the public transport services. They demanded to know why operating expenses had been allowed to increase from 58.3% of the railway's gross earnings in 1900 to 73.36% in 1929 30. The motor interests would not have been alone in believing that political influence and patronage had often overruled sound business sense in the shaping of the New South Wales rail system.

If motor transport were completely wiped out, the annual interest railway bill would not be reduced by a penny, nor would the colossal blunders of the past be remedied. 31

Road transport propagandists emphasised the modernity and efficiency of motor transport and justified their triumphs in the name of progress. The claim that bus operators used juvenile, sweated or non-union labour was refuted. Bus employees were said to receive above award wages but it was pointed out that there were few bus fleets and many buses

29. Ibid.
30. Railways and motors issued by the New South Wales Transport Defence Committee, 1929, p. 3.
31. Ibid., p. 6.
were owned by the driver and conductor in partnership. From this the pro motor faction argued that motor transport represented the struggle of free enterprise and the small businessman against obsolete and over protected state enterprise.

Commercial motor transport never operated entirely without regulation in New South Wales. The Metropolitan Traffic Act of 1900 regulated the operations of commercial motor vehicles within the metropolitan area. The Traffic Superintendent could refuse to licence buses to operate any given route but it was not his responsibility to rationalise urban transport services. Outside the metropolitan area commercial vehicles were regulated by local councils. However a patchwork system of local controls offered no basis for a rational statewide transport system.

Overseas voluntary or corporate control had been established over urban transport services. In London bus operators formed voluntary associations as early as 1838 to bring a degree of order to particular routes. In 1856 the London General Omnibus Company was formed and eventually, by coming to terms with or buying out smaller operators, gained control of most of London's buses. The Company thrived well into the motor

33. Ibid., p. 62.
age but in 1922 'pirate' services reemerged and chaos followed. In 1924 the London Traffic Act was passed empowering the Minister of Transport to designate 'restricted streets' and to specify the number of buses which could operate on them. Bus operators were allocated routes and were obliged to maintain an approved schedule throughout the day. The London Passenger Transport Act of 1933 established a Board with power over all metropolitan passenger services and the task of providing an adequate and properly coordinated system of passenger transport. Regulation of Australian urban bus services began with the Victorian Motor Omnibus Act of 1924. Similar legislation was introduced in South Australia in 1926.

In 1923 the Australian General Omnibus Company acquired land for a depot in Flinders Street, near Moore Park, and began negotiating with proprietors with a view to establishing control over Sydney's buses. However the Bus Proprietors Section of the Motor Traders Association declined to negotiate objecting to the proposed financial terms, especially the £30,000 share allocation to the promoters, the vagueness of the prospectus and the alleged inexperience and questionable capacity of the Company's managerial appointees. Subsequent amalgamation proposals, despite official prodding, also foundered. In August 1926 Chief Secretary Lazzarini told a

34. Ibid., p. 64.
35. Ibid., p. 77.
deputation of bus proprietors that unregulated competition was not only eroding the State's transport revenue but also destroying private bus companies. Lazzarini announced his intention to establish a transport board to regulate competition but hinted that a single bus company could expect more sympathetic consideration than could the individual proprietors. In 1927 the Traffic Superintendent, Charles Turbett, told a deputation of bus proprietors that if a bus company was formed he would ask the Government to licence it to operate. Bus proprietors on Sydney's North Shore did amalgamate but generally the industry remained indifferent towards self regulation.

The need to regulate bus services was not apparent to the Fuller Government which took office in April 1922. Buses were licenced on any route even in direct competition with the trams. R.T. Ball, the Minister for Works, speaking at a National Roads Association luncheon in October 1922, stated that he was unmoved by complaints from the Railway Commissioners. '... if the motor bus could beat the trams so much the worse for the trams. The public convenience had the first call on the Government and not the Railway Commissioners.' The open door policy towards the buses ceased after the Fuller Government lost office.

37. Ibid., August 1926, p. 27.
38. Ibid., July 1927, p. 32.
When the Lang Government took office on 17 June 1925 the idea of regulating Sydney's buses had been canvassed in several quarters. In 1923 the Bus Proprietors Section of the Motor Traders Association had called for the establishment of a transit board to regulate all metropolitan traffic\textsuperscript{40}. In 1924 Traffic Superintendent Charles Turbett returned from an overseas study tour an advocate of unified ownership of Sydney's buses by a company similar to the London General Omnibus Company\textsuperscript{41}.

J.T. Lang accepted the need to protect the public transport system. Railway workers lent significant support to Labor in a number of electorates and Lang would have seen the virtue of protecting their jobs. The tram services suffered as badly as the railways from motor competition. In 1919 Sydney's trams had recorded a profit of £18,488 but in 1925 incurred a deficit of £102,079 which rose to £278,400 in 1926. Tramway revenue increased from £2,237,701 in 1919 to £3,619,496 in 1926 but working expenses rose from £1,850,000 to £3,319,996. Increasing wages and the introduction of the 44 hour week in 1926 affected the tramways financial performance\textsuperscript{42}. Nevertheless in 1926 Lang stated that the Railway Commissioners had advised Cabinet that private buses had caused the trams to lose

\textsuperscript{40.} Ibid., June 1923, p. 545.

\textsuperscript{41.} \textit{Sydney morning herald}, 9 December 1924, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{42.} N.S.W. Government Railways and Tramways \textit{Report} 1926-1927, p. 2.
£102,000 in 1925 and expected the loss to reach £200,000 in 1926.\footnote{43}

At a Traffic Conference in August 1925 Chief Secretary Lazzarini stated that the Government was contemplating establishing an advisory traffic board to coordinate metropolitan traffic. The Conference responded by recommending the establishment of a transport and traffic board of 11 members, including representatives of motor interests, to advise the police on the control of all traffic including trams and pedestrians.\footnote{44} Lazzarini announced more of his policy in October 1925. Because of traffic congestion and the need to protect the public investment in the trams no more buses would be licenced to run in competition with the trams.\footnote{45} However no existing bus licences would be cancelled.

In January 1926 it was reported that the Railway Commissioners had been instructed to devise a plan for the nationalisation of all bus services in the County of Cumberland.\footnote{46} Bus proprietors were sufficiently alarmed to convene a mass meeting. The meeting resolved to protest against any nationalisation but to urge the Government to fully consider the question of compensation if the buses were taken over.\footnote{47} Lazzarini was undaunted and in July

\footnote{43} \textit{Australian motorist}, 1 February 1926, p. 334.  
\footnote{44} \textit{Good roads}, 15 October 1925, p. 5.  
\footnote{45} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 19 October 1925, p. 4.  
\footnote{46} \textit{Ibid.}, 9 January 1926, p. 1.  
\footnote{47} \textit{Ibid.}
1926 emphasised that tramway losses were due, in part, to bus competition. Lazzarini added that he intended to introduce legislation establishing a commission to control traffic. The buses would not be taken over by the Government but would be obliged to operate as feeders to the trams.\footnote{Sydney morning herald, 3 July 1926, p. 15.}

Lazzarini introduced his Transport Bill on 18 January 1927. Under the bill the Railway Commissioners would coordinate all transport services including buses.\footnote{N.S.W. Parliament Debates, 18 January 1927, Vol. 109, p. 437.} F.H. Stewart described the proposal as 'unsound, unfair and un-British.' Stewart added that:

\begin{quote}
The Tramway Commissioners should be required to justify the perpetuation of their obsolete and costly system, with its recurring and increasing deficits, instead of being provided with a weapon with which to bludgeon its competitors out of existence.\footnote{Daily telegraph, 20 January 1927, p. 7.}
\end{quote}

J.C. Watson complained that the Commissioners had been appointed because of their expertise in railway matters and did not necessarily know anything about motor transport.\footnote{Ibid.}

The criticism persuaded Lazzarini to revise the Bill. The powers originally proposed for the Railway Commissioners were transferred to a traffic board. The board would
consist of the Traffic Superintendent and representatives of the Railway Commissioners, motor bus proprietors and local government with an independent chairman. However on 27 January 1927 Lang announced that country bills would be brought on in preference to other measures. Lang's aim was to gain the support of country Labor members R.T. Gillies and V.W.E. Goodin in his struggle with Peter Loughlin. In February 1927 Lang ended the Parliamentary session. Following Labor's defeat in the 1927 General Election Lazzarini's transport legislation was cast into oblivion.

The Bavin Government took office with little sympathy for many of Lang's policies but with no intention of reviving Fuller's laissez-faire transport policy. The Traffic Advisory Committee appointed in December 1927 was asked to report, in addition to its deliberations on traffic control, on 'The competition between trams and omnibuses, and suggestion of means for the betterment of conditions, whether by coordination, elimination or otherwise.' The Committee reported in April 1928 and recommended that a Ministry of Transport should be established

... to study the transport and traffic requirements of the state, to determine the transport policy of Government or quasi-Government institutions which at present constitute a component part of the transport system of the State, and to ensure, on where necessary, to require coordination between them all.

52. Ibid., 22 January 1927, p. 7.


54. Ibid., p. 8.
The Ministry would encompass the railway and tramway administrations, the traffic police, motor registry, Main Roads Board, and Sydney Harbour Trust and Navigation Department. The Committee pointed out that a Ministry of Transport had been established in Britain in 1919 and urged the Government to study this model.

The Traffic Advisory Committee's preference for coordination would have given little comfort to the bus proprietors who were becoming increasingly suspicious towards Bavin's intentions. In April 1928 the Assistant Treasurer, B.S.B. Stevens, informed a deputation of bus proprietors that the government planned to coordinate bus and tram services and to eliminate overlapping services. However Stevens assured the proprietors that they would be treated on 'a reasonable and British basis.'\(^{55}\) In July Bavin asserted that there would be no confiscation, that disenfranchised proprietors would be adequately compensated and that the public investment in the trams would be protected\(^ {56}\).

The need for reform of the bus regulation system was emphasised by the Jarvie case in 1928. Under Sydney's 'ramshackle, graft-ridden system'\(^{57}\) would-be operators lobbied officials and Ministers for licences. The questionable nature of these dealings was highlighted by the allegation that Major M.L.F. Jarvie, M.L.A., and bus proprietor Michael Fitzgibbons had conspired to bribe

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Chief Secretary Albert Bruntnell to licence Fitzgibbons to operate a service between Campsie and Central Railway via Earlwood. A subsequent Royal Commission exonerated Bruntnell but found that there had been a conspiracy to attempt to bribe him. The Jarvie case had no direct political repercussions but left bus interests even more on the defensive. In 1928 a Commercial Motor Users Association was formed to fight for the rights of commercial motor operators. In January 1929 a New South Wales Transport and Motor Users Parliamentary Committee was formed to scrutinize transport legislation.

In March 1929 M.F. Bruxner, Minister for Local Government and leader of the Country Party, introduced a Transport Bill. Bruxner claimed that New South Wales was the only Australian state which had not made a serious effort to resolve its urban transport problems. His solution was the establishment of transport trusts in Sydney and Newcastle to control bus, tram and public vehicle traffic. A Commissioner of Road Transport would also be appointed. Following its introduction the Bill was allowed to stand over to permit interested parties to comment on its provisions. S.A. Maddocks, the Secretary of the Police Department, was sent overseas to collect information on other transport systems.

Part of the Government's policy was put into effect immediately. In June 1929 a number of taxi-bus operators

were convicted of plying for hire without licences\textsuperscript{59}. On appeal Judge Edwards ruled that taxi-buses which commenced and terminated their journeys on private property without picking up passengers en route, although passengers could disembark at intermediate points, were not 'plying for hire.' Consequently convictions were upheld only in those cases where passengers had been picked up en route\textsuperscript{60}. Bruxner immediately announced that the regulations would be amended as soon as possible to ban all taxi-buses\textsuperscript{61}.

Aware of their peril the bus proprietors attempted to seize the initiative. In September 1929 F.H. Stewart, backed by the metropolitan bus proprietors, offered the Government £8,000,000 for its tramways. Stewart proposed paying a deposit of £1,000,000 with the balance by annual instalments\textsuperscript{62}. The Treasury valuation of the tramways was £12,000,000 but Stewart claimed that the Treasury had reached this figure by totalling the expenditure on the trams since 1879 whereas his offer was a fair current valuation. The free enterprise diehards and opportunists on the Government benches may have seen merit in Stewart's scheme but Cabinet refused to negotiate. Bavin's earlier promise that the public investment in the trams would be protected was honoured.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 18 June 1929, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 27 August 1929, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 28 August 1929, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 1 March 1930, p. 2.
Bruxner reintroduced the Transport Bill on 31 January 1930. The Bill was unchanged in principle but many details had been altered following consultation with the bus proprietors, the motor trade, local government and traffic authorities. The Transport Trusts in Sydney and Newcastle were to control tramway operations, licence public vehicles and coordinate transport services in their respective areas. Bruxner, a champion of country interests, believed that the cities should finance their own transport systems without subsidies from general revenue. Maddocks had reported that cities such as Berlin, Toronto and Detroit, all of which possessed outstanding public transport systems, had opted for municipal control of their transport systems. Accordingly five local government representatives were to sit on each Trust. A business man nominated by the Government was to join the municipal representatives. The Commissioner of Road Transport was to act as chairman of both Trusts giving a degree of direction and coordination. The Bill provided for a 5% turnover tax on bus operators but the Government accepted a Legislative Council amendment substituting a fee based on the seating capacity of buses on each route up to a maximum of £4 per seat per annum. Another Council amendment extended the bus owners right of appeal and compensation.

The Bill also revised traffic control arrangements. In accordance with the recommendations of the Traffic Advisory Committee responsibility for the formulation of traffic laws and regulations was transferred from the Police to the Road
Transport Commissioner. The Commissioner also became responsible for issuing and recording motor vehicle registrations and drivers' licences. Provision was made for a permanent Traffic Advisory Committee. The new system released the Traffic Police to concentrate on enforcing the traffic regulations. A Road Transport and Traffic Fund, financed from registration fees, was established to meet the cost of traffic facilities, the administration of the Act and the Traffic Police. The establishment of this Fund diverted about £100,000 per annum from the Main Roads Fund.

Following the passage of the legislation regulations were gazetted on 1 August 1930. S.A. Maddocks was appointed Road Transport Commissioner. The Trusts surveyed road transport services in Sydney and Newcastle classifying bus services according to the extent to which they competed with the trams. The maximum fee of £4 per seat per annum was imposed on directly competitive services. In Newcastle 47 of the city's 77 services were classified as directly competitive and by 31 October 1931 only 56 services were still operating. Eight-eight of Sydney's 219 services were classified as competitive but at the end of October 1931 224 services were still operating in the city. The Sydney proprietors survived by abandoning the competitive sections of their routes or converting their operations to

63. N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report 1930-1931, p. 16.
64. Ibid., 1931-1932, p. 1.
feeder services. The taxi-bus operators were less fortunate as the Trusts decreed that their services must cease operating from 3 October 1930. Initially the operators declared that they would defy the Trusts but within one week they had dismissed their 400 employees and put their vehicles up for sale.\footnote{Daily telegraph, 11 October 1930, p. 2.}

The Lang Government, which took office on 4 November 1930, introduced more radical measures. In May 1931 it was announced that a Transport (Coordination) Bill would be introduced within a week. Opponents of the Bill dubbed it the Transport (Subordination) Bill and spoke of the Sovietisation of the State's transport facilities. A Transport Protection Committee was formed and bus employees resolved to fight the Bill 'wherever its clauses injuriously affected the industry.'\footnote{Sydney morning herald, 12 May 1931, p. 10.} The Bill, introduced on 25 May 1931, provided for a Board to coordinate and improve the State's transport facilities. The Board was required to report on the possibility of bringing the railways, trams, road transport and main roads under a single authority. A mileage tax would apply to truck journeys exceeding ten miles. The Legislative Council increased the limit to twenty miles.

Opponents of the Bill were appalled. Charles Lloyd Jones warned that 'Australians will rue the day when this bill
becomes law. It is an attempt to capture the means of distribution (or transport) and place it under government control. Frank Delando, President of the Motor Traders Association, asserted that the Bill was not intended to coordinate transport but to destroy motor transport. Delando blamed the railway's difficulties on political interference and patronage, increased working expenses, overstaffing and unsound business methods. Restrictions on motor transport could not cure the railway's ills according to Delando. The only result would be an increase in unemployment.

The Open road claimed that increases in working expenses, non paying country lines and reckless capital expenditure had created the railway deficit. It also noted that in 1929 the motor industry had employed 59,324 workers at an estimated £12,300,000 in wages. The wages of the 55,093 railway employees totalled £15,543,755. After 1929 the number of motor employees decreased whereas the number of railway and tramway employees had increased indicating, in the Open road's view, that the latter were overstaffed with overpaid employees. Furthermore the Open road feared that

... the administrative independence of the Main Roads Board will be entirely destroyed and the general road policy of the State seriously prejudiced through the intrusion of political control of the Board's operations.

69. Open road, 11 June 1931, p. 4.
70. Ibid., 11 June 1931, p. 4.
71. Ibid., 13 August 1931, p. 2.
The N.R.M.A. was already concerned that the Board had suffered because of a decline in motor tax revenue and the withholding of Federal Aid Roads Agreement funds as part of the Commonwealth retaliation against Lang's repudiation of interest repayments.

Despite the criticism the Bill passed and regulations were gazetted on 23 October 1931. The Coordination Board reclassified metropolitan bus services and ruled that 125 of the 224 services were directly competitive with the trams. The proprietors of the competing services were advised that the maximum tax defined in the Act of 1d. per passenger per section would be imposed on them from 31 October. F.H. Stewart protested that in the week ending 21 October the 90 buses of the Metropolitan Omnibus Company had grossed £3,769 and after paying operating expenses of £4,000 and the existing tax of £278 could not pay the new tax which would amount to £3,000 per week. The bus proprietors appealed to the Board but alleged that its Chairman, C.J. Goode, replied only that the buses were 'a luxury service and that the public would either have to pay for them or walk.' On 30 October the Omnibus Proprietors Association declared that all taxed services would cease operating on the following day. The untaxed services would continue for the time being '... but in all probability [would] cease at an early date.'

74. Ibid., 27 October 1931, p. 1.
The plight of the bus services aroused considerable concern. A group of Parramatta business men protested to Lang\textsuperscript{76}. It was reported that 28 buses were carrying shoppers to Parramatta from areas such as Baulkham Hills, Merrylands, Wentworthville and Hornsby\textsuperscript{77}. In addition about 400 businesses which thrived along Parramatta Road between Missenden Road and Taverners Hill were said to rely on the custom of bus passengers\textsuperscript{78}. On 28 October a Bus Protest Meeting, attended by representatives of 26 suburban councils, 6 progress associations and 6 chambers of commerce resolved to protest to Lang with Alderman Blair of Burwood commenting 'We hear of revolution coming from the Bolsheviks but I think it will have to come from the better classes.'\textsuperscript{79} Subsequent meetings on 30 October at Dulwich Hill, Marrickville and Campsie, with attendances estimated at 3,000, 1,500 and between 5,000 and 6,000 respectively, resolved that 'The future support of parliamentary representatives would depend on the effect of the action they take to keep the buses on the road.'\textsuperscript{80} Eastern suburbs residents were also concerned. The Mayor of Woollahra asserted that the suburb of Bellevue Hill had developed due to the introduction of bus services and warned that residents remained dependent on private bus services\textsuperscript{81}.

\textsuperscript{76} Daily telegraph, 27 October 1931, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{77} Motor Traders Association Journal, 10 July 1932, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Daily telegraph, 29 October 1931, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 31 October 1931, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 27 October 1931, p. 7.
Bus employees expressed alarm and resolved to hold a one day strike in protest. Following assurances from Lang that they would not lose their jobs the men called off the strike. They resolved to work off their notices and then trust in 'Providence, Mr. Lang and the Transport Commission.'

Lang's reputed promise to the bus employees fuelled speculation that the Government might take over the buses. The bus proprietors did not discourage the speculation. The proprietors maintained that the new taxes would render their services uneconomic and that they were not terminating their operations as a means of embarrassing the Government. If it was thought that the Government could, if it wished, take over and operate the buses the blame for the termination of the services, and the subsequent unemployment among bus employees, would be more firmly fixed on Lang and the Board. In order to enhance the impression of Lang's determination to eliminate the competing bus services F.H. Stewart offered to give the Government the profits from his bus operations for the duration of the Depression provided that his services were maintained and his employees kept in work. Lang was unmoved.

At midnight on 31 October a crowd, estimated at 500, gathered in the city to see the competing buses depart for the last time. Some of the bus crews wore crepe armbands

82. Ibid., 30 October 1931, p. 1.
while the buses' destination boards were decorated with wreaths and epitaphs. The spectators cheered the buses and their crews as they departed. Seventeen of the competing services continued after 31 October but by June 1932 only four were still operating and paying the tax.\textsuperscript{85}

Bus employees reacted bitterly to losing their jobs. Some of the men demanded an immediate black ban on the feeder bus services but union officials decided to await the outcome of a joint deputation of bus owners and employees to the Coordination Board on 3 November.\textsuperscript{86} When the employees met to hear a report from the deputation, members of the Omnibus Proprietors Association attended and requested a hearing. The union officials rejected the request and left the meeting calling on the men to follow them. However many of the men stayed to listen.\textsuperscript{87}

It soon became apparent that the union officials had no intention of embarrassing the Government by taking the drastic measures favoured by their rank and file extremists. The officials did not attend a public meeting on the Domain on 15 November, which reputedly attracted a crowd of 20,000, where it was resolved that the Coordination Act should be repealed '... for the reason that it deprives us of our

\textsuperscript{85} N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report, 1931-1932, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{86} Sydney morning herald, 3 November 1931, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 4 November 1931, pp. 11-12.
liberty and convenience, and has already severely and detrimentally affected employment, farming, industry and commerce. A meeting of the bus employees on 16 November again rejected a motion declaring the feeder services black and some speakers condemned those who had attended the Domain meeting. A public meeting at the Town Hall on 23 November again called for the repeal of the Coordination Act. However the bus employees no longer represented a united or determined section of the anti-coordination forces.

On 2 November 1931 the Coordination Act was extended to the whole State thus bringing country road transport services, previously licenced under the Local Government Act, within the Board's jurisdiction. Trucks carrying goods further than 20 miles in competition with the railways became liable to a tax of 3d per ton per mile. The tax also applied to trucks carrying passengers. In January 1932 the Board announced that commercial motor vehicles operating out of another state or the Federal Capital Territory had to be licenced under the Act and pay the full tax. Exemption was granted to motor services, excepting those carrying passengers in competition with the trains, operating within 10 miles of the New South Wales border. This measure eased pressure

88. Ibid., 16 November 1931, p. 9.
89. Ibid., 17 November 1931, p. 10.
90. Ibid., 24 November 1931, p. 10.
on small scale local operators but still encouraged inter-
state hauliers to transfer their freight to the New South
Wales railways at some point inside the 10 mile limit.
Despite these restrictions 367 motor operators took out
licences to operate in competition with the trains.\textsuperscript{91}

The regulations applied to trucks aroused some fierce
opposition in rural areas. Farmers in the Hawkesbury area
were particularly vocal as the regulations virtually cut them
off from their Sydney markets. Riverina residents, who
were also cut off from their customary suppliers and markets,
resented the attempt to channel their trade to Sydney. In
addition country social and sporting activities were restricted
by the ban on carrying passengers by truck. Various anomalies
emerged. It was reported that in one area, where cream and
milk had been delivered to the factory by road, the carrier
transferred his load to the train, raced ahead to the
appropriate station, collected the produce and then delivered
it to the factory.\textsuperscript{92} Although cumbersome the procedure
avoided the tax. The truck tax was felt less keenly in
the city but one large Sydney department store was reported
to have lost £1,000 worth of business per week because it
could no longer make road deliveries beyond the 20 mile limit.\textsuperscript{93}

The Board granted a number of concessions as complaints
mounted. Eggs and poultry were allowed free passage within

\textsuperscript{91} N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report

\textsuperscript{92} Coach and motor body builder, 15 May 1932, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
a 35 mile radius of both Sydney and Newcastle. The tax was reduced to ½d per ton mile in the case of vegetables. Restrictions on the carriage of passengers by truck were relaxed for surf clubs and country sporting teams. Still the Board won few friends and the activities of its inspectors were widely resented. The Board employed 27 enquiry officers, who worked mainly in the metropolitan area, and in country areas employed railway officers to police its regulations. The Open road claimed that a total of 350 officers was employed in policing the regulations. Claims were made that inspectors stopped and questioned private motorists, sometimes searching their cars, to ensure that neither goods nor passengers were being carried illegally. Farmers, who were permitted to use their trucks for a fee of 2/6 per annum, also caught the inspectors' attention.

Coordination was intended to be an interim measure. In March 1932 Lang introduced the Ministry of Transport Bill which provided for a Board of Commissioners to assume the functions of the Commissioner of Road Transport, the Trusts, the Tramway Management Board, the Railway Commissioners, the Main Roads Board and the Coordination Board. The new Board would be responsible to the Minister for Transport. It was hoped the Board would realise economies by rationalizing transport administration and services. The Bill became law on

22 March 1932. Lang was apparently determined to push on with his policy. The appointments of the Road Transport Commissioner, S.A. Maddocks, and the Railway Commissioner, W.J. Cleary, both of whom had been appointed by Bavin, were terminated from the morning of 22 March. James McGirr became Minister for Transport. However time had run out for Lang as he was dismissed from office by the State Governor, Sir Philip Game, on 13 May 1932.

Lang's transport policy was unpopular in many circles but it achieved most of its objectives. In 1930-1931 Sydney's trams recorded a loss of £433,096 while in Newcastle the loss was £105,399. These losses occurred despite the introduction of concession fares and faster services in an effort to attract passengers. The Coordination Board believed that only the elimination of bus competition would salvage tramway revenue and claimed that the implementation of this policy had benefitted tramway revenue by £465,000 between 1 November 1931 and 30 June 1932. Replacement tram services were provided in some cases but the total cost was only £145,000. Lang's measures were largely preserved by his successors and in 1933-1934, when tramway accounting was revised to allow for the writing off of abandoned assets and a depreciation allowance, the metropolitan tramways recorded a profit of £58,745. Whilst improving economic conditions had made it easier for the tramways to record a profit the effectiveness of Lang's policy is apparent.

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96. Ibid., 1931-32, p. 2.
97. Ibid., 1933-34, p. 3.
The private bus services suffered severely under coordination (see Table 13). However, the Board cannot be said to have been merely anti-bus. In fact it arranged for 59 new feeder services to commence in the metropolitan area during its reign. Nevertheless private bus services were vigorously suppressed whenever they appeared to threaten the tramway's interests.

The Depression increased commercial motor operator's problems. The number of trucks registered in New South Wales decreased from 44,868 in 1929 to 44,464 in 1930 and 39,226 in 1931 before recovering to 41,897 in 1932. As shown in Table 14 buses suffered an even more severe setback.

Claims were made that horse traction regained importance at the expense of motor traction during the Depression. Horses were said to have temporarily replaced cars and tractors in rural areas. In 1932 it was reported that country farriers and saddlers had plenty of work. Another report stated that renewed demand had seen the price for horses which would have fetched £6 before the Depression rise to £26 or £30 in 1932. However prices paid at the Maitland Horse Market did not rise in this manner. In September 1928 best light horses sold to £10

98. Coach and motor body builder, 15 August 1932, p. 97.
99. Ibid., 15 May 1932, p. 35.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year ended 30 June</th>
<th>Mileage</th>
<th>Passengers</th>
<th>Net Profit</th>
<th>Net Loss</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>16,911,793</td>
<td>89,845,001</td>
<td>£153,439</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>19,927,783</td>
<td>94,481,982</td>
<td>£142,335</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>19,548,162</td>
<td>92,125,207</td>
<td>£ 4,856</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>11,012,921</td>
<td>43,544,551</td>
<td></td>
<td>£44,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>8,060,840</td>
<td>29,004,526</td>
<td></td>
<td>£19,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>7,639,603</td>
<td>24,369,270</td>
<td>£ 4,361</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>7,650,597</td>
<td>25,466,806</td>
<td>£ 7,323</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>8,010,714</td>
<td>27,493,830</td>
<td>£ 8,789</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>7,852,872</td>
<td>27,118,379</td>
<td>£17,835</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>7,114,844</td>
<td>25,609,176</td>
<td>£23,972</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>7,462,517</td>
<td>27,754,440</td>
<td>£25,462</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Motor cabs</th>
<th>Horse cabs</th>
<th>Motor vans</th>
<th>Horse vans</th>
<th>Motor bus</th>
<th>Horse bus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2,235</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1,078</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1,913</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Compiled from N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report, 1931-1932.*
at Maitland while best draught horses reached £31-10-0\textsuperscript{100}. In September 1931 best light horses reached £14 but best draught horses realised only £25-10-0\textsuperscript{1}. Official statistics do not reveal any resurgence by horse transport. The number of horses in New South Wales declined from 567,371 in 1929 to 534,945 in 1930 and 524,512 in 1931 before recovering slightly to 524,751 in 1932.

\[\texttt{0 - 0 - 0}\]

The embattled motoring interests generally welcomed the demise of Lang and supported the return of the United Australia Party - Country Party coalition. The Motor in Australia complained of 'The ruthless suppression which has been practiced in order to bolster up an effete railway and tramway system ...' and claimed that '... the general verdict of the motor trade is that a change of government cannot but act as a healthy stimulus to business.'\textsuperscript{2} The Open road also expressed relief commenting that 'From the standpoint of its impossible policy it would have been only logical for the Lang Government to stage a serious onslaught on private motorists' and reminded its readers of the rumour that a new horse power tax of at least £16 per horsepower was under consideration\textsuperscript{3}. Former bus employees decided to campaign for the U.A.P. during the election campaign\textsuperscript{4}.

\textsuperscript{100} Country life and stock and station journal, 25 September 1928, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., 2 October 1931, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{2} Motor in Australia, June 1932, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{3} Open road, 7 July 1932, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{4} Sydney Morning herald, 28 May 1932, p. 17.
Motoring interests were no doubt encouraged by the promise of the U.A.P. leader, B.S.B. Stevens, to remove the transport authorities from political control, to raise the limit on truck transport to 50 miles and to restore 'essential' bus services\(^5\).

The Stevens-Bruxner Government was confirmed in office at the election of 11 June 1932 and the State's transport system again came under the control of M.F. Bruxner. As promised the limit on truck transport was increased to 50 miles while fresh fruit and vegetables could be carried tax free over any distance. Concessions were granted to country road passenger services which operated on days when no train services were available. Bruxner later explained that the 50 mile limit was chosen because it was widely accepted as reasonable and because it protected coastal shipping ensuring that the Wollongong-Kembla trade would continue to be conducted by ship\(^6\). C.J. Goode, whose conduct during his time as a railway employee was to be investigated by a Royal Commission, resigned clearing the way for Bruxner to recall W.J. Cleary. Bruxner had appointed S.A. Maddocks as an adviser and on 9 August 1932 Maddocks became acting Road Transport Commissioner. The Transport Board delegated its authority over road transport and tramways to Maddocks.

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5. Ibid., 26 May 1932, p. 10.
After the initial changes the dismantling of Lang's transport system slowed. Bruxner certainly disapproved of Lang's policy of integration which he believed facilitated political interference in staffing and similar matters\(^7\). On the other hand Bruxner had no intention of resurrecting the Trusts which he believed had been obsessed with local issues and had failed to view the transport system as a whole\(^8\). A return to laissez-faire was unthinkable for a Government committed to the Premiers' Plan because an escalating public transport debt would wreck the Government's budgetary plans. In July 1932 Maddocks informed Sydney motor operators that transport must be regarded as a public utility and that it must be coordinated in the best interests of the State\(^9\). Bruxner's Transport (Division of Functions) Act, introduced in September 1932, retained the office of Minister of Transport, allowing for a degree of coordination, but reversed the policy of integration by separating the administration of main roads, railways and road transport and tramways.

The future of Sydney's buses became the subject of a drawn out debate. In July 1932 a Transport Advisory Committee was appointed to advise the Government on methods of selecting bus routes and on the establishment of bus services in relation

\(^{7}\) Aitkin, D., *The Colonel*, p. 179.

\(^{8}\) Ibid.

\(^{9}\) *Open road*, 7 July 1932, p. 3.
to the trains and trams\textsuperscript{10}. The Committee reported in November and recommended that no new tram lines should be laid and that three lines which were separated from the main system should be closed and replaced by buses. However the Committee suggested that only specified buses should run right into the city. The Committee stated that it would prefer to see the trams and buses placed under common ownership and proposed that a public utility company be floated and given a 25 year franchise\textsuperscript{11}.

Reports that Bruxner had recommended to Cabinet that the government should purchase the idle buses and introduce its own services alarmed some U.A.P. members. On 20 December 1932, following the tabling of the Transport Advisory Committee's report in the Legislative Assembly, J.R. Lee, U.A.P. member for Drummoyne, introduced an urgency motion that

\begin{quote}
\textit{in the opinion of this House}
\textit{(i) it is not in the best interests of the public to extend the government undertakings by the socialisation of the buses}
\textit{(2) Appropriate remedial action should be forthwith taken by the Government for the reestablishment of idle bus services under private enterprise.}\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Lee emphasised that he was not censuring the Government. He asserted that since Cabinet had refused to allow debate of the bus question in the party room the Assembly was the only forum in which rank and file Government members could express

\textsuperscript{10} Hotchkiss, op. cit., p. 114.

\textsuperscript{11} N.S.W. Transport Advisory Committee \textit{Report}, Sydney 1932, p. 88.

their views. During the debate Bruxner stated that he considered Lee's motion as a censure on the Government and himself. Lang was pleased to agree with Bruxner and the Opposition voted with Lee. Eight U.A.P. members and one Country Party member also supported Lee making 28 votes for the motion. Thirty-seven members voted against it. The first Government bus service commenced operating between Manly Wharf and Cremorne Junction on 25 December 1932.13

The introduction of government bus services probably completed the disillusionment of the motoring interests. In 1932 it became known that Bruxner intended to make interest payments and repayments of all loan money spent on roads between 1925 and 1928 a charge against the road funds. The funds were already meeting interest and sinking fund payments on loans raised after 1928 under the provisions of the Main Roads (Amendment) Act of 1928. Bruxner's measure would deprive the road funds of £200,000. J.C. Watson commented 'One can scarcely credit the outrage, as the wrong and unfair character of such raids was something for which the Bavin Government roundly and rightly condemned the Lang Government...'.14

Speculation over the future of Sydney's buses continued into 1933. On 10 February Bruxner informed a deputation

that he hoped to transfer the metropolitan transport system to a public utility company representative of the citizens. Stevens also asserted that a public utility company would be formed provided that sufficient private capital was available and that the needs of the community were met. On 27 February Bruxner repeated the proposal and his belief that the cities should carry the cost of their own transport systems. Bruxner expressed the hope that a government appointed corporation could solve the problems of the metropolitan transport systems thus allowing them to be handed over to private enterprise or municipal control 'to do what they liked with it.' With Stevens and Bruxner selling off state owned enterprises, for example the Monier Pipe Works, the brick works and quarries, Labor supporters took the Government's transport statements seriously. The Labor daily condemned the 'outrageous proposal' suggesting that it was a further step by big business and its political representatives to transfer public utilities to private ownership.

While some U.A.P. members may have rejoiced at their leaders apparent return to the free enterprise path there is some doubt as to what Stevens' and Bruxner's real intentions were. Bruxner always claimed that he would have accepted any

16. Ibid., 17 February 1933, p. 10.
17. Ibid., 28 February 1933, p. 9.
18. Labor daily, 17 February 1933.
reasonable offer to operate Sydney's trams and buses but none was ever made\textsuperscript{19}. In May 1934 a Sydney solicitor, Mr. Cathels of Messrs. R.C. Cathels and Jones, stated that, on behalf of a client, he had offered Stevens £5,000,000 for the trams. The offer was unacceptable because the Government valued the service at £9,000,000\textsuperscript{20}. It is not known whether a reasonable offer for the metropolitan transport services would have been accepted. Aitkin suggests that Stevens, if not Bruxner, was determined to retain the bus services in order to protect the finances of the state transport system\textsuperscript{21}. The fact that the transport services ran at a profit of £248,618 in 1933-1934 would have encouraged Stevens to retain the buses. Another possible explanation is that the sale of other state enterprises had enabled the Government to meet its obligations under the Premiers' Plan and removed the need to sell the transport services. Whatever the reason the buses remained under public ownership.

\textbf{o - o - o}

Between 1932 and 1937 motor traction made renewed encroachments into areas previously served by draught animals. Tractors became more numerous in New South Wales (see Table 15). Statistics of the use of tractors and horses in sowing wheat were collected for the first time in connection with the

\textsuperscript{19} Hotchkiss, op. cit., p. 143.
\textsuperscript{20} Sydney morning herald, 11 May 1934, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{21} Aitkin, D., \textit{The Colonel}, p. 184.
### TABLE 15

Tractors used on farms in N.S.W.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of tractors</th>
<th>Tractors per 1,000 holdings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>6,242</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>8,936</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>11,507</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>12,926</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Official yearbook of N.S.W. 1938-1939, p. 700.*
wheat crop of 1939-1940. Of 4,694,200 acres sown, 2,049,020 were worked with horses and 2,645,130 with tractors. Wheat farmers owned 107,236 horses and 7,259 tractors.

Commercial motor vehicles also became more significant as the Depression became less acute. The number of lorries and vans in New South Wales increased by 82% between 1932 and 1937. Conversely the number of horses increased by only 4% (see Table 16).

The decline of horse transport was most apparent in Sydney and Newcastle. Horse cabs and vans lost ground to their motorised counterparts (see Table 17).

The expansion of motor transport occurred in spite of strict enforcement of the regulations. In 1935 it was reported that transport officials were paying particular attention to trucks carrying freight from Victoria into the Riverina. 'Ambushes, pursuits at high speed during darkness, tactical dodging along lonely roads, and the pitching of camps within the distance limit - all these and other moves are features of a contest that is providing plenty of excitement and amusement.' The contest took a serious turn when one Melbourne firm continued operating despite fines and, finally, a Supreme Court injunction. The Road Transport Commissioner exercised his powers under the Coordination Act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Horses*</th>
<th>Lorries and Vans**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>524,751</td>
<td>41,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>528,943</td>
<td>46,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>532,028</td>
<td>52,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>534,853</td>
<td>59,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>542,862</td>
<td>67,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>545,829</td>
<td>76,141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Official yearbook of N.S.W. 1938-1939, p. 779.

**Official Yearbook of N.S.W. 1938-1939, p. 413.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Taxi cabs</th>
<th>Horse cabs</th>
<th>Motor vans</th>
<th>Horse vans</th>
<th>Motor bus</th>
<th>Horse bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1,078</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1,913</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,835</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,944</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,972</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>1,073</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,939</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,877</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Compiled from N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Reports 1932-1939.*
and seized three of the carrier's vehicles returning them only after the carrier promised to comply with the Act. Another case involved the Melbourne chain store operators O. Gilpin Ltd., who transported goods from Melbourne to their stores at Henty, Wagga and Junee by road. Both Gilpins and their carrier challenged the Coordination Act in the High Court under Section 92 of the Australian Constitution which guarantees freedom of trade between the States. The High Court dismissed the appeals and leave to appeal to the Privy Council was refused. These cases were seen as confirmation of the legality of the Coordination Act. Its effectiveness is shown by the decline in the number of lorries and trailers licenced to operate between Melbourne and Southern New South Wales from 174 in 1935 to 21 in 1939.

The Government increased its hold on metropolitan transport services. In 1936 the feeder buses, which had survived the Lang era unscathed, were licenced under the Transport Act of 1930. Although the Act provided for 12 month licences it also allowed for the cancellation of licences without compensation. On 1 March 1937, 15 metropolitan and 7 Newcastle routes were taken over 'In order to consolidate the omnibus services ...' in the two cities.

In 1937 commercial motor transport was a thriving if strictly regulated industry. The financial difficulties of

25. Ibid.
the Depression years had forced the non-labor parties to accept that any government had to protect the huge public investment in the trams and trains. Thus the regulatory system had come to stay. Having accepted responsibility for road building in 1924, during the 1930s the State found it necessary to erect yet another extensive administrative system to control the vehicles travelling the roads for profit.
CHAPTER 6: RECESSION AND RESURGENCE

During the 1930s motoring declined under the impact of the Great Depression but gradually revived through the more prosperous years of the decade. During the Depression the number of motor vehicles registered decreased. Both the motor trade, with declining business, and motorists' organisations, with declining membership, felt the impact of the recession. Road accidents decreased during the Depression probably because motorists made less use of their cars. The decrease saw a moderation in demands for stricter traffic regulation but concern over road safety continued. As economic conditions improved and the number of vehicles increased the road accident toll again spiralled alarmingly. By the mid 1930s the Government was seriously seeking more effective means of traffic control.

Motor vehicle registration figures quickly showed the effect of economic recession. The number of motor cars registered declined by almost 15% between 1929 and 1931 and the 1929 level of registrations was not regained until 1935 (see Table 18). The number of motor cycles registered also declined during the Depression but showed no real recovery during the remainder of the decade. There is some doubt as to how accurately the registration statistics reflect the number of vehicles actually in use. In 1932 it was estimated that 20,000 unregistered vehicles were on the road. Registration stickers were introduced in December 1932 to

1. Open Road, 27 October 1932, p. 1.
### TABLE 18
Registered motor vehicles 1929-1939*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Car</th>
<th>Van/Lorry</th>
<th>Cycle</th>
<th>Cab</th>
<th>Bus</th>
<th>Cars</th>
<th>All motor Vehicles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>170,039</td>
<td>44,868</td>
<td>30,655</td>
<td>1,364</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>9.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>164,169</td>
<td>44,464</td>
<td>27,258</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>9.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931***</td>
<td>144,749</td>
<td>39,226</td>
<td>23,124</td>
<td>1,091</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 1932****</td>
<td>147,043</td>
<td>41,897</td>
<td>23,037</td>
<td>1,068</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>8.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>152,851</td>
<td>46,615</td>
<td>22,751</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>8.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>161,342</td>
<td>52,581</td>
<td>22,793</td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>6.12</td>
<td>9.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>172,156</td>
<td>59,614</td>
<td>23,119</td>
<td>1,063</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>9.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>183,406</td>
<td>67,257</td>
<td>23,418</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>10.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>198,925</td>
<td>76,141</td>
<td>24,049</td>
<td>1,194</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>11.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Official yearbook of New South Wales 1938-39, p. 413.

** Includes Newcastle Transport District in 1930 and later years.

*** The number of registered vehicles as at 31/10/31 was reduced by 3,261, viz. 1,938 cars, 565 lorries and 758 cycles as a result of a revision of the records which showed that the method formerly used for assessing the monthly figures had led to overstatement.

**** Similar revision with respect to public vehicles in June 1932.
enable the police to tell at a glance whether or not a vehicle had current registration. However the reduction in the number of accidents during the Depression suggests motorists' driving hours were genuinely reduced.

Another feature of vehicle registration figures during the 1930s was the decline in new vehicle registrations. The number of new vehicles registered fell by 57% in 1930 and 71% in 1931. The 1927 peak of 30,757 new registrations was not equalled during the 1930s. On the other hand the number of used cars registered following a change in ownership fell by only 5% in 1930 and then increased by 25% in 1931. Between 1930 and 1934 the number of used cars registered exceeded the number of new cars registered (see Table 19). It seems that while some motorists may have been forced to sell their cars many others were able to afford at least a second hand car. Motorists may have economised by purchasing used instead of new cars but the plight of people forced to economise during the Depression can be considered less acute than that of those forced into the dole queues.

Naturally the motor trade deplored the continuing slump in new car sales. Trade interests warned that the vehicles on New South Wales roads were becoming increasingly obsolete. Older vehicles, possibly in dubious states of repair, were denounced as safety hazards.

The motor industry suffered severely during the Depression. Various claims were made that the horse trade was reviving
### TABLE 19

Registrations of motor vehicles (excluding renewals)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cars</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Van or Lorry</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>26,825</td>
<td>13,888</td>
<td>8,477</td>
<td>5,131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>11,152</td>
<td>13,197</td>
<td>4,172</td>
<td>5,936</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>3,273</td>
<td>16,560</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>7,104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>3,645</td>
<td>20,531</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>9,478</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>5,709</td>
<td>21,440</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>11,787</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>10,776</td>
<td>19,265</td>
<td>4,527</td>
<td>12,437</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>15,061</td>
<td>18,247</td>
<td>6,630</td>
<td>12,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>18,836</td>
<td>18,358</td>
<td>8,447</td>
<td>12,797</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>23,979</td>
<td>19,448</td>
<td>10,434</td>
<td>13,096</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Official yearbook of New South Wales 1938-39, p. 413.
at the expense of the motor trade. It was reported that at Parramatta a car had been exchanged for a sulky, horse and 22 fowls while another had changed hands for 4/-, a shot gun and a bushel of corn². Grellman Brothers, coach and motor body builders of West Wyalong, reported that whereas the coach building part of their business had all but died before the Depression, in 1931 they were employing seven men on building horse vehicles³. Grellmans also claimed to have accepted several cars as trade-ins on suilkies including one Chevrolet which they later sold for £85. As mentioned in the previous chapter official statistics do not support the idea that horse transport revived at the expense of motor transport during the Depression. It may be that people who owned horses found it more economical to use them more and save on motoring costs. Even so the number of establishments in New South Wales manufacturing horse vehicles fell from 113 in 1930-31 to 99 in 1932-33.

There is no doubt that the motor body building industry declined during the Depression. The number of motor bodies produced in New South Wales fell from 13,321 in 1928-29 to 497 in 1931-32. Even the Australian leader, Holden, suffered a 95% decline in output while its ordinary shares, which had been quoted at 57/6 in 1930, sold for 7/6 in 1931⁴. The vehicle assembly trade was under the same stress

². Coach and motor body builder, 15 July 1931, p. 75.
³. Ibid., 15 May 1931, p. 34.
and in July 1931 General Motors decided to close their other plants, including the Marrickville plant, in order to maintain full production in the Melbourne assembly plant.\(^5\).

As economic conditions improved during the 1930s the motor trade revived. General Motors reopened their Marrickville plant in March 1934 and by April 1935 the Coach and motor body builder could report that the 'Motor body builders who were almost at a standstill during the Depression have their shops full, and business is going with a swing.'\(^6\) Repairers and accessory retailers also enjoyed a return to prosperity.

During the 1930s the motor trade came under increasing scrutiny with the N.R.M.A. proclaiming its determination 'to put the dishonest trader out of business.'\(^7\) Car dealers who misrepresented the age and ownership of the vehicles they sold were condemned and the N.R.M.A. Technical Department continued to inspect used cars for members. In 1931 a used car section was included in the *Open road*. Members and prospective members could advertise a car for sale for 2/- per advertisement. The vehicle had to pass inspection by the Technical Department but the seller recovered the

---

TABLE 20

Industrial Establishments in New South Wales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Motor vehicles and cycles, construction &amp; assembly</th>
<th>Repairs</th>
<th>Motor Body</th>
<th>Cycle, motor accessories</th>
<th>Horse Vehicles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>825</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934-35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1,073</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1,131</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Compiled from N.S.W. Statistical Register 1930-31 - 1937-38.
£1-1-0 inspection fee from the purchaser. The Open road guaranteed that all prices were fair while the Technical Department undertook to ensure, as far as possible, that sellers had clear titles. In addition, buyers could advertise their requirements in the Open road. The Technical Department maintained a list of buyers and sellers and attempted to match cars for sale with buyers' requirements.

Apparently some motor traders resented the N.R.M.A.'s efforts because in 1934 the Open road complained that certain dealers were refusing to allow inspections of their vehicles. Furthermore some dealers were said to be defaming the N.R.M.A. by suggesting that the Association's engineers could be bribed to give false reports. It was also alleged that the N.R.M.A. was itself selling cars and was mainly interested in attracting customers away from commercial dealers. The Open road denied these charges and retaliated by publishing a list of dealers, claimed to be 81% of Sydney's used car dealers, who had signed an agreement allowing N.R.M.A. inspection of their vehicles. Other dealers were invited to sign the agreement with the promise that their names would subsequently be published.

Garages were criticised by consumers for dealing in faulty tyre retreads and inferior spare parts. Petrol was said to be adulterated with kerosene or mineral turpentine,

8. Ibid., 22 January 1931, p. 2.
bowsers were alleged to give short measure and it was claimed that some retailers sold inferior grades of petrol as first grade. In 1931 the Motor Traders Association blamed the petrol companies for the faults of the garages. The Association claimed that a fierce price cutting war between garages in 1928 had seen profits fall below the viable minimum margin of 3d per gallon to 1d or 4d per gallon. Ultimately the petrol companies introduced a stabilization scheme which guaranteed resalers profits. However the scheme attracted new traders to the industry. The companies responded by installing new pumps wherever requested. By 1931 the Motor Traders Association feared that declining business would provoke a new round of price cutting with garages resurrecting sharp practices to stay in business. Instead the oil companies attempted to increase their hold over the industry. Garage proprietors who received petrol from independent distributors were advised that they would be charged 1d per gallon more for better known brands if they continued dealing with the independents. The N.R.M.A. condemned the move as monopolistic.

The N.R.M.A. hoped to see the garage industry regulated by law. The Association called for legislation, similar to the Pure Food Acts, to outlaw the adulteration of petrol. In 1933 representatives of the Department of Labour and Industry and the motor trade discussed the registration of

10. Ibid., 2 April 1931, p. 3.
11. Ibid., 17 December 1931, p. 2.
motor mechanics\textsuperscript{12}. In September 1933 Stevens stated that a bill was being prepared covering the registration of garages\textsuperscript{13}. The Bill had not been introduced in 1935 when representatives of the Garages and Motor Transport Association asked a group of Parliamentarians to do all they could to secure the registration of mechanics and garages. The deputation claimed that incompetent repairers were rendering vehicles unsafe\textsuperscript{14}. No official action followed.

Self regulation of the garage industry was advanced in 1933 with the formation of the Institute of Mechanics. The Institute aimed to encourage mechanics to expand and update their knowledge\textsuperscript{15}. In 1936 the N.R.M.A. discontinued its examination and certification of mechanics. Members were advised that, in future, membership of the Institute should be regarded as the guarantee of a mechanic's competence\textsuperscript{16}.

The petrol companies were criticised for maintaining high petrol prices. The companies asserted that excessive distribution costs contributed to higher prices. The N.R.M.A. replied that if the companies could cooperate to maintain prices they could cooperate to rationalize distribution\textsuperscript{17}.

\begin{itemize}
\item 12. Motor Traders Association \textit{Journal}, 10 July 1936, p. 29.
\item 16. Ibid.
\item 17. Ibid., 13 November 1930, p. 4.
\end{itemize}
In 1929 the N.R.M.A. had tried, unsuccessfully, to conclude an agreement with one petrol company to provide cut price petrol to N.R.M.A. members at selected service stations throughout New South Wales\(^{18}\). The Association was unlikely to underestimate the petrol companies' ability to protect their interests.

The Federal Government also criticised petrol prices. In 1930, when petrol prices were increased by 2d. per gallon, the Acting Prime Minister, J.E. Fenton, noted that the companies were landing petrol at 1/4 ½d. per gallon and selling it for 2/3d. per gallon. At the same time petrol sold for 1/4 per gallon in Britain and for between 5d. and 10d. per gallon in the United States\(^ {19}\). Urged on by the N.R.M.A. and the R.A.C.A. Fenton instituted a departmental inquiry into petrol prices. When no action followed the N.R.M.A., supported by a number of New South Wales Councils, began demanding a Royal Commission into petrol prices. The *Open road* asserted that it was common knowledge that the departmental inquiry had concluded that Petrol should cost no more than 1/8d. per gallon and had called for government action\(^ {20}\).

A Royal Commission was finally held in 1933. Giving evidence before the Commission J.C. Watson stated that the N.R.M.A. had been unable to obtain supplies of petrol to sell

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18. Ibid., 29 August 1929, p. 1.
20. Ibid., 13 November 1930, p. 4.
at reasonable prices\textsuperscript{21}. However in October 1932 an independent company had begun selling a good grade of petrol below the general price. Watson may have been referring to Independent Oil Industries Ltd. which established bulk storage facilities in Federal Road, Glebe and which marketed Purr Pull petrol. In April 1933 the major oil companies announced that a fall in wholesale prices had enabled them to reduce their prices by 5d. per gallon. Watson noted that the fall in the United States was only one cent per gallon and claimed that the greater reduction in New South Wales was part of a price war. Eventually prices fell a further 2d. per gallon to 1/5. The N.R.M.A. declined to take sides in the price war but warned that only competition would ensure reasonable prices and '... motorists should be wise enough to see that competition remains.'\textsuperscript{22} In February 1934 all companies increased prices by 1d. per gallon signalling the end of the price war. No action resulted from the Royal Commission. Apart from respecting the power of the oil companies the federal government could not forget that customs duties accounted for 7½d. of the price of each gallon of petrol.

In 1935 J.C. Watson asked the N.R.M.A. council to support the establishment of a new company to be known as the Australian Motorists Petrol Company. The Company was promoted by W.A. O'Callaghan and William Gaston both of whom had been associated with the Associated Motorists Petrol Company of

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 6 July 1933, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 26 October 1933, p. 4.
New Zealand. The Australian company would sell petrol at the London price plus importing costs. The petrol would not necessarily be cheaper but a definite relationship between local and overseas prices would be maintained. The N.R.M.A. Council wished the promoters well but expressed scepticism about their ability to compete against the established oil companies. The Council resolved that the N.R.M.A. should not directly involve itself in the oil industry.

Watson continued to support the venture and when the company was incorporated in New South Wales on 23 March 1936 he agreed to serve as Chairman of Directors. James McMahon and H.I. Johnston, the N.R.M.A. Secretary, were members of the syndicate which floated the company. The N.R.M.A. gave some assistance. The Open road of 27 February 1936 suggested that motorists should give the independent companies some of their business. The 'girls' in the N.R.M.A. General Office were asked to decide between the various colour schemes suggested for the company's bowsers. The Company was to become famous under the name Ampol. Watson may not have beaten the major oil companies but as foundation Chairman of Ampol he could claim to have had some impact on the industry.


In 1937 the Service Station Proprietors Association asked the government to establish a petrol marketing board. The board would fix profit margins, licence petrol stations, regulate the number of retail outlets and trading hours and establish standards for various grades of petrol\textsuperscript{26}. Again no action followed.

Government intervention in the motor industry was confined to the federal government's attempts to encourage local production of motor vehicles. Not all the schemes put to the government were soundly based. In 1931 Edward M. Davies advised the government that Australian Made Motor Cars and Aeroplanes Ltd. planned to build a medium priced car to sell at £500 to £650 and a four door sedan to sell at £300\textsuperscript{27}. The Company purchased 3,749 acres of land at St. Marys and Kingswood where it planned to build a factory which would be the focal point of a model city to be named Austral City\textsuperscript{28}. Unfortunately the scheme failed.

The idea of local manufacture won little favour in the Australian motor industry. The \textit{Australian motorist} explained

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Sydney morning herald, 19 March 1937, p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Edward M. Davies, Chairman of Directors, Australian Made Motor Cars and Aeroplanes Ltd. to J.H. Scullin, 25 June 1931. Australia Prime Minister's Department, ' Manufacture of motor cars in Australia.' C.A. CRS A461 item D418/1/6 part 1.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Peach Brothers to E.M. Davies, 12 May 1931, Australia Prime Minister's Department, 'Manufacture of motor cars in Australia.' C.A. CRS A461 item D418/1/6, part 1.
\end{itemize}
that while 80% of the cost of each vehicle assembled in Australia was spent on locally made components the most important parts still had to be imported. Local production of these parts could not begin immediately. The small scale local manufacturers probably lacked the capital to expand their operations to produce the parts. Overseas manufacturers had the capital but if they established factories the local manufacturers would eventually be squeezed out.

The fortunes of motorists' organisations followed much the same cycle as those of the motor trade during the 1930s. N.R.M.A. membership rose from 36,924 in 1929 to 49,644 in 1930 but then declined to 39,856 in 1933. This decline was not due to any neglect of recruiting. In 1932 the N.R.M.A. offered County of Cumberland members 10/- worth of maps and guide books for every new member, accompanied by the 10/6 joining fee and £1-1-0 annual subscription, they could introduce to the Association. In 1934 radio station 2GB became the N.R.M.A.'s official station. The activities of the Association were reported in weekly broadcasts while emergency information on road conditions was broadcast whenever necessary. As economic conditions improved membership increased and in October 1936 the Open road announced that the magic membership figure of 50,000 had been passed.

29. Australian motorist, 1 August 1936, p. 373.
31. Ibid., 7 June 1934, p. 3.
32. Ibid., 22 October 1936, p. 1.
The N.R.M.A. continued to expand its service facilities during the 1930s. The first outing organised by the Touring Club, which was established in 1929, was a picnic at Cordeaux Dam on 23 February 1930. The Association also arranged for members to receive 20% rebate at the newly developed motor courts. The first court opened at Seven Mile Beach in 1930 and offered accommodation in furnished cabins at 4/- per day and camping sites at 2/6 per day. Country members were not forgotten and were eligible for one month's honorary membership of the Sydney Bicycle and Motor Club during visits to the capital. The Club did not provide accommodation but had a bar and restaurant. In 1932 a camp site was established at Willoughby Bay for the duration of the Easter Show and the celebrations marking the opening of the Harbour Bridge. An extension of the N.R.M.A.'s interest in touring was its agreement to cooperate with the Royal Australian Historical Society in preserving historic landmarks and structures. Presumably Dr. Harold Norrie, who was President of the R.A.H.S., as well as being an N.R.M.A. Councillor, was the driving force behind the agreement.

Tourists became more discerning during the 1930s. In 1935 the N.R.M.A. agreed to cooperate with the Commercial Travellers Association to seek improvements, especially in sanitation, to the accommodation offered by country hotels.

33. Ibid., 20 March 1930, p. 5.
34. Ibid., 10 July 1930, p. 1.
35. Ibid., 14 February 1935, p. 3.
In 1936 the N.R.M.A. responded to members' demands to cease listing the best hotel in each town and to register only hotels which met N.R.M.A. standards. Previously the N.R.M.A. had assumed that touring members would patronise the best hotel in a town but received many letters stating that members preferred to arrange itineraries with overnight stops only at first class hotels.

N.R.M.A. road services were expanded between 1930 and 1937. From 31 July 1933 metropolitan road service became available 24 hours a day with the exception of Christmas Day. In 1937 the metropolitan road service staff, which then numbered 44, moved into separate quarters at Woolloomooloo. Eight additional guides were appointed in country areas in 1937 and branches were established in Lismore and Newcastle.

N.R.M.A. Insurance suffered a setback during the Depression. The number of policies fell from 26,000 in 1930 to 19,700 in 1932. However the Company quickly recovered. In September 1933 it established a subsidiary company, known as Car Credits Ltd., to finance the purchase of new cars on one third deposit at 5% interest. The prevailing commercial rate was 8%. In February 1934 finance was made available for the purchase of second hand cars at a slightly higher rate of interest. The Insurance Company also became a

36. Ibid., 20 July 1933, p. 2.
38. Ibid., 31 August 1933, p. 1.
39. Ibid., 15 February 1934, p. 2.
landlord by purchasing Hoskins Building at the corner of Spring and Gresham Streets. The building was converted from four to six floors and the area not needed by the Company was rented to the N.R.M.A. Thus the N.R.M.A. gained its own headquarters while the Insurance Company could hardly have found a more reliable tenant.

During the 1930s the N.R.M.A. continued to campaign for road safety. In 1930 a 'golden emblem' was made available to members who signed a pledge to promote road safety and assist other members in difficulty. The N.R.M.A. hoped to '... get back some of that old-type spirit that bound motorists into one big road fellowship.' There is a temptation to dismiss this as a forlorn hope but when a road fellowship coat badge was offered at a cost of 1/- over 2,000 were sold before the end of 1930. To increase drivers' competence the N.R.M.A. organised 'finishing courses' consisting of 2 one hour driving lessons and 3 one hour lessons on vehicle mechanics and maintenance. The lessons cost 5/- per hour with an N.R.M.A. vehicle available for an additional 5/- per hour.

Safety checks of vehicles were first offered in 1933 for a fee of 6/-. Repairs were checked for 3/- A more ambitious project was undertaken in 1935 when York Motors of Barker Street made their garage available for vehicle

40. Ibid., 20 March 1930, p. 1.
41. Ibid., 11 December 1930, p. 5.
42. Ibid., 6 February 1930, p. 5.
43. Ibid., 16 February 1933, p. 1.
testing every Monday and on the first Saturday in each month. Brakes, steering, wheel alignment, headlamps, wipers and horns were tested and faulty vehicles were expected to be repaired and resubmitted for testing\textsuperscript{44}. During the first session of testing only 13\% of vehicles were passed as safe while 73\% were found to have 'front wheel troubles', 50\% to have defective brakes and 40\% to have faulty headlights.

The N.R.M.A. kept the motorists' case before the traffic authorities but had to recognise that some motorists drove dangerously. In 1934 members were invited to report any instances of dangerous driving they might witness to the Association which would admonish the culprit by letter. On the other hand the N.R.M.A. was convinced that the Transport Department treated some motorists with undue severity. In 1936 the Association criticised the Departmental policy of requiring motorists convicted of serious offences to show cause why their licences should not be cancelled. The N.R.M.A. asserted that only the magistrate who heard the case was competent to rule on the cancellation of licences. Maddocks replied that the Department acted only when it was clear that the magistrate had not considered the question and only when there was serious doubt as to a driver's fitness to hold a licence\textsuperscript{45}. The N.R.M.A. found itself in a dilemma on this issue. As the road toll increased support grew for the introduction of statutory speed limits. The N.R.M.A. replied

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 21 November 1935, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 24 September 1936, p. 2.
that stricter enforcement of the existing regulations would render statutory limits unnecessary. Accordingly criticism of Maddock's firm enforcement of the regulations seems somewhat inconsistent.

During the Depression the N.R.M.A. took up the cause of motorists who could not afford to pay registration fees annually and called for a system of payments by instalments. The suggestion was not welcomed by the Police, because it created extra work for them, the Transport Department, because of administrative costs and the need for additional staff, or the Government, which would be kept waiting for revenue. However by March 1932 New South Wales and Tasmania were the only states which did not allow payment by instalments. In December 1932 New South Wales introduced payment by quarterly instalments. Transactions were subject to a service fee of £1-15-0 and a levy of 10% of the annual registration fee. When the N.R.M.A. complained that the fees were intended to discourage payment by instalment Bruxner suggested that the N.R.M.A. should set up its own scheme.

The N.R.M.A. was well aware of the problems of accepting payments by instalment. At the Association's 1930 Annual Meeting Watson had opposed the introduction of a system of quarterly payment of N.R.M.A. Insurance premiums claiming that costs and staff would increase. However the N.R.M.A. arranged with the Automobile and General Finance Company for

46. Ibid., 3 March 1932, p. 1.
premiums to be paid on 25% deposit, with the balance in 16 weekly instalments at cost plus 5%\(^47\). Applying its experience to the registration problem the N.R.M.A. announced that it could operate a system of quarterly payments which would cost £1-6-0 less than the government's scheme in the case of a £10 annual registration. Bruxner promptly rejected the N.R.M.A. plan on the grounds that it would be too expensive to operate on a general basis and that he could not allow the N.R.M.A. to operate it as a monopoly. Bruxner added that the state would lose £500,000 in revenue if every motorist paid by instalment\(^48\).

The N.R.M.A. did not escape criticism during the 1930s. The Association was criticised for its 'business as usual' attitude during the Depression. One journal complained that 36% of the N.R.M.A.'s total expenditure of £49,687 went on administrative expenses while a surplus of £28,088 had been accumulated\(^49\). The journal argued that the N.R.M.A. should economise, reduce membership subscriptions and cease accumulating surpluses. The N.R.M.A. replied that it intended to retain reasonable surpluses but, as a non profit organisation, it devoted any increase in its revenue to improving services to members\(^50\). Another criticism came from a member who resigned 'as a protest against the continued extravagant

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47. Ibid., 22 October 1931, p. 3.
49. Australian commercial motor, 15 August 1931, p. 16.
50. Open road, 26 September 1929, p. 2.
claims of the N.R.M.A. for increased expenditure on roads
for the benefit of a luxury at this time of financial
stringency. 51 The Open road hastened to point out that the
member was the first to resign for this reason but added
that the N.R.M.A. believed that no road should be improved
beyond its economic value. In any case the N.R.M.A. felt
that motorists had already paid for any road improvements
they requested through motor taxation.

Even after the Depression the N.R.M.A. was criticised
for its ambition. The Truth newspaper alleged that the
Association was wasting its time:

... toying with all manner of enterprises such as
insurance, car credits, car adjustments and the like,
over which, while it boasts parentage it has little
or no control .... Out of the guineas of owner-
drivers have been, and are being built, great
important executives, myriad staffs, enormous
overheads and profits, which don't pour into the
pockets of those who put up their guineas to build
up the NRMA. 52

Watson replied that no councillor, office holder or executive
officer of the N.R.M.A. was associated in any paid capacity
with any of the subsidiary companies. N.R.M.A. Insurance was
operating as a mutual company with its profits going to benefit
policy holders. Watson added that only 2% of the Association's
revenue was accumulated, as a necessary safety margin, while
the balance was spent for the benefit of members.

51. Ibid., 7 August 1930, p. 4.
52. Ibid., 11 February 1937, p. 1.
The R.A.C.A. suffered more severely than the N.R.M.A. during the Depression. This is not altogether surprising considering that R.A.C.A. subscriptions were £5/5/- for city members and £2/12/6 for country members whereas the N.R.M.A. subscription was £1/1/-.

By October 1932 the R.A.C.A.'s subscription arrears had reached £6,294 and a trading deficit of £2,800 was expected. The Club Committee regarded the situation as 'dangerous and difficult' and was no doubt alarmed that previous economies had proved ineffective.

In June 1931 the Roads and Tours Committee had responded to a General Committee appeal for economy by dismissing five patrolmen and reducing the wages of the remaining patrolmen by 10/- per week. To offset this measure Club service stations were appointed in several areas. In September 1931 the Roads and Tours Committee rejected a suggestion that all the patrolmen should be dismissed and Club members be granted the right to call on N.R.M.A. guides for service.

General economies and exhortations to members to make greater use of the Club's facilities having failed to improve the situation the Committee announced in October 1932 that city membership subscriptions would increase to £6/6/- and country membership subscriptions to £3/13/6.

The Committee claimed that the alternatives were to dismiss staff or close down part of the Club house. Despite these warnings a meeting of members on 30 November rejected the higher subscriptions claiming they would cause more members to resign. Fortunately

53. Royal Automobile Club of Australia Circular, 16 December 1932.

54. Royal Automobile Club of Australia. Roads and Tours Committee Minutes, 1 June 1931.

the Club's finances had reached their nadir. Economies, an increase in trading and £500 raised from the Club's insurance activities saw the 1932 deficit contained to £1,526. In addition debenture holders agreed to a reduction in interest from £5/18/6d to £4/10/- and the AMP Society agreed to defer 1% of the interest due to it until times improved.

In 1933 an executive committee, with the President and Vice President sitting ex-officio, was formed to control the Club's affairs\(^56\). The executive, assisted by improving economic conditions, was able to report a favourable balance in 1934\(^57\). From 1 November 1934 membership fees were reduced to £3/3/- for city members, £2/2/- for country members, £1/11/6 for lady members and £1/1/- for associate members\(^58\). Thus associate membership became available at the same cost as N.R.M.A. membership. By 1936 the worst was over. All interest payments had been met, a surplus of £10,000 accumulated and plans laid for a number of renovations and improvements to the Club House\(^59\).

The R.A.C.A. expanded its activities during the 1930s. The opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge was applauded and, under the influence of the event, the Committee admitted lady

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56. Motor in Australia, April 1933, p. 33.
57. Ibid., March 1934, p. 13.
58. Ibid., November 1934, p. 9.
members to the dining room and roof area for the first time. Encouraged by the success of the experiment, and precedents set by a number of leading London clubs, the R.A.C.A. granted lady members permanent access to the dining room and the roof. Only the lounge and the games room remained male domains.\footnote{60}

In 1932 an inspection scheme for used cars was instituted.\footnote{61} A road service manager was appointed in 1934 to establish a road service network.\footnote{62} By 1937 140 service stations had been enlisted, in most parts of the State, to provide road service to members. The R.A.C.A. guides ceased giving road service and worked mainly as pilots for country members visiting Sydney.\footnote{63} In 1936 an agreement between the Club and radio station 2UW enabled the R.A.C.A. to broadcast weekend road and weather information and to advertise the Club's services.\footnote{64}

Despite the Club's consolidation of its services rumours abounded of an amalgamation with the N.R.M.A. Speculation increased in 1935 when the Light Car Club of New South Wales, which had affiliated with the N.R.M.A. in 1934, was granted affiliation with the R.A.C.A. The Light Car Club was the controlling body for motor sport in the State but some people believed that it would also act as a link between the N.R.M.A. and the R.A.C.A. In December 1935 the \textit{Daily telegraph} reported

\footnotetext[60]{Ibid., May 1932, p. 7.}
\footnotetext[61]{Ibid., October 1932, p. 19.}
\footnotetext[62]{Ibid., April 1934, p. 8.}
\footnotetext[63]{Ibid., January 1937, p. 27.}
\footnotetext[64]{Ibid., October 1936, p. 14.}
that merger negotiations were under way between the Club and the Association. Watson stated that he knew of no negotiations and, while he held the R.A.C.A. 'in the highest esteem' and favoured cooperating with it for the benefit of motorists, he would oppose any merger as the N.R.M.A. could not submerge its identity in any new organisation. Conversely the R.A.C.A. stated that its President and some N.R.M.A. councillors had held private conversations which '... were not directed to any merger or sinking of identity, and were not sought by the R.A.C.A., but arose from the spirit of friendly cooperation existing between the two organisations ....' There the matter rested and it was not until the 1940s that the Club abandoned its service activities and negotiated access to N.R.M.A. service facilities for its members.

Formal cooperation between motorists' organisations was organised by the Australian Automobile Association. During the 1920s the various state motorists' organisations had met at annual conferences and cooperated in federal matters through the Commonwealth Automobile Association. At the 1929 Conference the N.R.M.A. moved that an Australian Automobile Organisation be formed to act as a federal lobbying group. The organisation was established with headquarters

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66. Open road, 16 January 1936, p. 11.  
67. Motor in Australia, 1 February 1936, pp. 18-19.  
in Sydney but achieved so little that at the 1930 conference the N.R.M.A. moved that it be reconstructed as the Australian Automobile Association. The reconstructed body would represent motorists at the federal level without diminishing the work of the state bodies. The R.A.C.A. protested that the N.R.M.A. had rejected a similar plan in 1928 only to adopt it and push it through the 1930 conference against the wishes of the majority of A.A.O. members. The R.A.C.A. expressed its willingness to remain a member of the A.A.O. However if the A.A.O. was replaced by the Australian Automobile Association the Club would act independently and extend its activities to the federal sphere. The R.A.C.A. remained outside the Australian Automobile Association until 1935 but, predictably, the N.R.M.A. backed Association survived the Club's hostility.

The A.A.A. concentrated on attacking federal motor taxation. Motorists' organisations believed that their members were overtaxed and complained about the proportion of motor tax revenue which found its way into general revenue. In 1935-36 the federal government collected £1,793,188 from customs duties on vehicles. 319,336,547 gallons of petrol were imported yielding almost £10,000,000 in customs and excise duties. During the same financial year the federal government paid out only £2,778,899 under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement.

Motorists' organisations also resented the fact that petrol taxes had not been reduced in line with other taxes.

The budget of 1932, the supplementary budget of 10 November 1932 and the budget of 1933 reduced income tax, land tax and sales tax. In addition customs and excise duties were reduced on some items and federal entertainment tax was abolished. Petrol tax remained unchanged.

The Federal Treasurer, R.G. Casey, argued that motorists were the major users of the roads and that many roads had been constructed for their particular convenience. Accordingly, it was reasonable for motorists to contribute to the cost of road depreciation and the repayment of road loans. In practice motorists were making a major contribution to road finances. In 1932-33 the New South Wales Main Roads Board received £1,228,720 from state motor taxes and £503,050 from the federal road grant. The Board also received £276,095 from local councils, £731 from other government departments, £35,709 from miscellaneous sources and £398,734 from loans. Casey also calculated that motorists had paid only about 4% of the total capital value of streets and roads in Australia leaving them with a good bargain. It is a matter of opinion whether motorists should have to meet the cost of roads built and worn out before the motor car arrived on the scene.

In 1935 the N.R.M.A. expressed a hope that Casey's attitude was softening. However Casey refused to promise a reduction in the petrol tax during 1935. Casey explained

70. Open road, 26 April 1934, p. 3.
71. Ibid., 24 October 1935, p. 1.
that the Government intended to reduce the most onerous taxes first. In 1937 motorists were still waiting for a reduction of the petrol tax.

\[ \text{Road safety reemerged as a major issue in the later 1930s.}
\]

The number of road fatalities declined between 1929 and 1934. The 1929 casualty rate was not surpassed until 1936 but the upward trend continued between 1934 and 1938 (see Table 21). Conversely in the United States, where the toll had risen between 1932 and 1937, there was an 18% reduction in road deaths in 1938\(^{72}\). In addition the vehicle population was increasing at a faster rate than the road toll. In New South Wales the opposite situation applied. In 1934-35 the number of road accidents increased by 21%, the number of deaths by 24% and the number of injuries by 18%. The number of registered vehicles increased by only 7%.

More disturbing facts emerged when the Department of Motor Transport began publishing detailed analyses of traffic accidents in 1934. The Department found that 84.8% of fatal accidents in 1933-34 were due to human error and only 3.6% were unavoidable. Similar conclusions were drawn in subsequent analyses. In 1933-34 drivers were at fault in 46.1% of the accidents and pedestrians in 31.1%\(^{73}\). Mostly drivers exhibited carelessness or lack of judgement but the


\(^{73}\) N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report 1933-34, p. 78.
**TABLE 21**

Motor accidents in New South Wales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Accidents</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Injured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td></td>
<td>415</td>
<td>7,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td></td>
<td>358</td>
<td>7,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td></td>
<td>290</td>
<td>5,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td></td>
<td>258</td>
<td>4,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td></td>
<td>161</td>
<td>3,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>7,281</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>5,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>8,786</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>6,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>9,833</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>6,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>11,460</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>7,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>12,575</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>8,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>11,906</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>8,398</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Compiled from N.S.W. Police Department Annual Reports 1929-1939.*
more blameworthy offences were increasing. In 1933-34 magistrates cancelled or suspended 129 licences following drunken driving convictions and 22 following convictions for furious or dangerous driving. In addition the Commissioner cancelled or suspended 26 licences following drunken driving convictions and 12 following furious or dangerous driving convictions. The Commissioner refused 76 licence applications. In 1935-36 magistrates cancelled or suspended the licences of 239 drunken drivers and the Commissioner took similar action on 34 licences. Furious or dangerous driving convictions provoked 157 cancellations or suspensions by the magistrates and 45 by the Commissioner. In addition the Commissioner refused 205 licence applications. Support for harsher traffic regulations grew although these could hardly eliminate carelessness or errors of judgement.

Existing traffic laws, especially those restricting the speed of motor vehicles, were strictly enforced during the 1930s. Inter-city record breaking was discouraged. In 1929 Captain J.E. Phowey, a British racing car driver, announced that he would attempt to set a new Melbourne-Sydney record. The Police directed that the attempt must not proceed. In 1934 E. Poole had his licence suspended following his attempt on the Sydney-Bourke record. Police

74. Ibid., p. 81.
75. Ibid., 1935-36, p. 21.
76. Daily telegraph, 8 January 1929, p. 2.
**TABLE 22**

Major causes of accidents in which driver was at fault*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>1935-36</th>
<th>1936-37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excessive speed</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carelessness at intersections</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careless driving generally</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not keeping left</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skidding</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not give right of way</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtaking improperly</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intoxicated</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inexperience</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting corner</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision obscured by vehicle</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly decelerating</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigued or drowsy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Compiled from Commissioner for Road Transport Reports 1935-36, 1936-37*
in Canberra were less opposed to motor sport and agreed to close off side streets so that Northbourne Avenue could be used as a speedway for championship events. However in New South Wales speedsters of all classes were suppressed. In 1935 a driver, who had been pursued by police for 8 miles at 70-85 m.p.h. and who halted only after colliding with an electric light stand, was fined £50 and disqualified from holding a licence for three years.\(^77\)

Special campaigns were mounted to ensure stricter enforcement of all regulations. In May 1935 motorists were warned that unless the accident rate fell traffic police would institute a special enforcement campaign\(^78\). The campaign began on June 7 and after one week Superintendent Carter announced that the accident rate had fallen by 40\%, that motorists were exercising extreme care and that if the Police could be convinced that dangerous driving had been eliminated the extra patrols might be withdrawn\(^79\). The Government had provided three high powered cars and four new high powered motor cycles for traffic patrol work to facilitate the campaign and these remained in service after the enforcement campaign terminated.

Police enforcement of the regulations was criticised by some motorists. In September 1933 E.S. Solomon complained in the Legislative Council that:

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77. N.S.W. Police Department Report, 1935, p. 11.
During recent weeks many citizens in the metropolitan area have come to me and stated that certain members of the police force are waging guerilla warfare against motorists in the city area. I feel that many apparently needless prosecutions are being made for minor technical breaches ...

Further resentment was aroused by the cancellation or suspension of licences by the Road Transport Commissioner.

By 1936 feeling had reached a level similar to that existing prior to the formation of the N.R.M.A. In July a Motorists Defence League was established. Membership was open to all drivers and motor cyclists. Membership fees of 5/- were paid into a fund used to retain barristers to defend members in traffic cases. J.C. Watson pointed out that the N.R.M.A. already provided legal services to its members. Watson predicted, accurately, that the League would be short lived. However the formation of the League shows the depth of feeling among some motorists.

Many new ideas on road safety were put forward during the 1930s. In 1930 a deputation representing 28 local councils asked Bruxner to prohibit pillion riding on motor cycles as dangerous and conducive to immorality. The deputation complained that a pillion passenger interfered with the rider's ability to control his machine. Furthermore young men were said to be using their cycles to convey girls to secluded spots. Pillion riding was not banned but a

82. Ibid., 13 February 1930, p. 5.
regulation gazetted in 1933 restricted the carrying of pillion passengers to cycles fitted with proper footrests. The passenger was required to sit astride the motor cycle and to face forwards.\(^{83}\)

The problem of defective vehicles attracted attention. The N.R.M.A. Technical Department passed only 48.5% of the second hand vehicles it examined in 1929-30 as safe.\(^{84}\) 32% of the rejected vehicles had defective brakes and 10% had faulty steering. Vehicle defects were responsible for 10.6% of fatal accidents in 1934-35.\(^{85}\) In both 1935-36 and 1936-37 6.4% of all accidents were due to vehicle defects.\(^{86}\)

In 1932 the N.R.M.A. suggested that all vehicles should undergo annual safety inspections. Maddocks replied that vehicles were tested at their initial registration and that owners should maintain them adequately thereafter. Maddocks disclosed that a Departmental Committee was examining the problem but had been unable to resolve the questions of mechanics' qualifications and standards of garages.\(^{87}\) It took until 1939 to resolve the problems. From October 1, 1939 it became necessary to secure a certificate of vehicle fitness from an approved garage to effect reregistration.\(^{88}\)

\(^{83}\) New South Wales Government Gazette, 2 June 1933, p. 1969.
\(^{84}\) Open road, September 1930, p. 3.
\(^{85}\) N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report 1934-35, p. 72.
\(^{86}\) Ibid. 1935-36, p. 71, 1936-37, p. 87.
\(^{87}\) Daily telegraph, 21 December 1932, p. 8.
A number of measures were introduced to improve vehicle safety. From 1 February 1934 all new vehicles had to be fitted with automatic windscreen wipers instead of hand operated wipers. During 1935 rear view mirrors became compulsory equipment on all vehicles, the use of defective tyres became an offence and the police received wider powers to inspect vehicles for defects. Glaring headlights remained a problem and from 1 October 1939 only approved glass could be used in headlights.

Drivers also came under scrutiny. In 1930 the N.R.M.A. put forward a scheme, devised by a 'well known Sydney medical man', for the medical examination of drivers. The Police replied that medical examinations were unnecessary because only a small percentage of accidents were due to the medical condition of the driver. In addition, the Police explained, the Commissioner could refuse or cancel a licence on the grounds of physical handicap and any licence applicant with an obvious handicap was invariably checked. Screening procedures were tightened in 1934 when it became compulsory for applicants for driver's licences to declare whether or not they suffered from diabetes, epilepsy, fits or attacks of fainting or giddiness and if so to furnish medical evidence.

89. New South Wales Government Gazette, 24 November 1933, p. 4129.


91. Ibid., 1939-40, p. 25.

92. Open road, 6 February 1930, p. 4.
of the effect on their driving. Epileptics were generally excluded from driving while diabetics were licenced only after they had produced the fullest medical evidence of their fitness. In 1939 oral examinations on the traffic regulations were added to driving tests.

The mental and emotional stability of drivers was also debated. In 1934 J.C. Watson drew attention to an American survey of 5,000 drivers taken over 5 years which showed that 63% were not involved in accidents, that 24% were involved in one accident and that the remainder were involved in accidents 'virtually every year'. Watson suggested that accident prone drivers could be identified through psychological testing and, if they could not be reeducated, be deprived of their licences. The Daily telegraph adopted a similar view asserting that 15% of motorists were responsible for all road accidents. 'Analyse this 15% and you meet a queer bunch of suicides, habitual drunks, physical defectives, juvenile irresponsibles, psychopaths and automobile morons.' In the Traffic Court Mr. Scobie S.M. provided further definition of the culprits stating that

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93. N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report, 1933-34, p. 22.
94. Ibid., 1938-1939, p. 25.
95. Open road, 2 August 1934, p. 1.
The intemperate driver and the speed maniac deserve no consideration from those who administer the law. The swanking hog who makes a third line of traffic in his blind frenzy to pass all other cars on the track is another nuisance, and with him is classed the super careful idiot who, remote in a world of his own, trundles stolidly along the crown of the road at 15 mph, and fondly imagines that a 'Safety First' placard should be hung around his neck as a reward of merit.  

Invective against drivers responsible for road accidents did nothing to compensate their victims. In 1929 it had become compulsory for applicants for drivers' licences in New Zealand to insure against third party liability. Insurance companies were compelled to issue policies to all applicants. Britain introduced compulsory third party insurance in 1931 but there insurance companies could refuse to insure proven bad risks thus, theoretically, excluding bad and reckless drivers from obtaining licences. A different system was established in California in 1929. There any driver convicted of negligent driving and having had damages awarded against him was required to settle within 15 days or have his drivers' licence and vehicle registration suspended. The suspensions would be lifted only after settlement and the taking out of insurance to cover future claims.

The Californian system was designed to encourage drivers to insure but it failed to protect the victims of uninsured,

98. Open road, 25 June 1929, p. 11.
100. Ibid., 21 November 1929, p. 16.
impecunious drivers. In addition a system based on the insurance of drivers rather than vehicles overlooked the case of the unlicenced driver involved in an accident. The N.R.M.A. favoured compulsory third party insurance on the British model. The Association feared that if insurance companies were compelled to accept all applicants, as in New Zealand, premiums would be high to cover bad risks. On the other hand the British system placed great reliance on the objectivity and integrity of insurance companies.

Dr. Richard Arthur, the Minister for Public Health, raised the question of accident costs and compensation in 1928. Arthur complained that motor accidents were contributing to overcrowding in Sydney hospitals\(^1\). J.C. Watson replied that motor accident casualties accounted for only a small percentage of the State's hospital cases\(^2\). In 1929 Arthur announced that steps were being taken to ensure that users of ambulance services, especially motorists, met the costs of the service\(^3\). Watson replied that it was unfair to single out motorists because all fair minded motorists were prepared to pay for services rendered\(^4\). Arthur then stated that he held no grudge against motorists but believed that they 'should meet the legitimate charges arising out of accidents.'\(^5\) He suggested

\(^1\) Daily telegraph, 23 January 1928, p. 3.
\(^2\) Ibid., 24 January 1928, p. 4.
\(^3\) Ibid., 11 August 1929, p. 6.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid., 12 August 1929, p. 2.
an annual fee of 5/- or 10/- for motorists to cover hospital and ambulance costs.

Arthur's views were reinforced in 1931 when the Hospitals Commission estimated that 5% of hospital cases, totalling 100,000 bed days per annum, were motor accident victims. The Commission suggested annual fees of 5/- for motor cars and 2/6 for motor cycles to create a fund from which hospitals would receive 7/- per day for motor accident in-patients and 5/- per day for out-patients. Ambulances would be paid 6d. per mile for attending motor accidents. The N.R.M.A. suggested that such costs should be met by bad drivers through increased fines and higher licence fees in the two or three years following conviction. However in 1931 the Hospitals Association came out in favour of third party insurance in preference to a special tax on motorists. Motorists organisations had accepted the general principle of compulsory third party insurance as early as 1929 but the formulation of an acceptable system was to occupy another 10 years.

In 1934 the Road Transport Commissioner reported that the problem of third party insurance was under investigation. Action was certainly necessary because it was estimated that 60% of motorists were uninsured. In 1935 the Commissioner

was able to report that a bill had been drafted and submitted to a representative conference but that agreement could not be reached on an important principle of the bill.\footnote{11}

According to press reports the Government and the insurance companies could not agree on whether the vehicle or the driver should be insured or on the level of premiums. In addition the companies were reported to want a new special court, similar to the body which heard workers compensation cases, to settle claims. The companies feared that juries, swayed by emotion, might prove overly generous with the companies' money. However the Government baulked at the cost of maintaining a special tribunal.\footnote{12} It is also possible that the companies feared that government control over third party insurance might be extended into wider control over the insurance industry. Furthermore the companies seem to have been determined to protect their profits. In 1937 many companies either demanded higher premiums for, or refused to renew, taxi cab insurance on the grounds that the business was unprofitable.

The Government appeared unwilling to coerce the companies. A Government of a different political persuasion might have introduced a third party scheme through the Government Insurance Office leaving the private companies to decide whether or not to compete for that class of business. However

\footnote{11}{N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report 1934-35, p. 25.}

\footnote{12}{Daily telegraph, 23 May 1936, p. 2.}
in March 1933 the Stevens-Bruxner Government had restricted
the Government Insurance Office to covering Crown risks and
accepting worker's compensation insurance when required to
do so by private employers\textsuperscript{13}. By 1937 New South Wales was
clearly lagging behind in the third party insurance field
as South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania were all operating
viable schemes. In 1937 a private members bill providing
for compulsory third party insurance in New South Wales was
introduced. Even the Opposition refused to support the bill
asserting that the Minister for Transport must be responsible
for any compulsory scheme. Still action was delayed and a
compulsory scheme did not come into force until 1941.

Traffic congestion became a more pressing problem in
Sydney during the 1930s. Representatives of the Police, motor
trade and business interests discussed the problem in 1935
giving rise to a revision of parking regulations. Parking
was prohibited at peak hours in the area bounded by Hunter,
Elizabeth, Park and George streets. Vehicles were also
prohibited from standing, except to pick up or set down
passengers, between 8.15 and 9.15 a.m. and 5.15 and 6.15 p.m.
on the congested side of New South Head Road, Oxford Street,
Parramatta Road and a number of other main roads\textsuperscript{14}. In 1937
Bruxner suggested that all new city buildings should include
parking areas for employees but the City Council dismissed
the idea as impractical\textsuperscript{15}.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Official yearbook of New South Wales 1938-39}, p. 541.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{N.S.W. Road Transport Department Report 1934-35}, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Daily telegraph}, 6 February 1937, p. 1.
A more spectacular innovation was the introduction of automatic electric traffic signals. The first set in the state came into operation at the intersection of Kent and Market streets on 13 October 1933. Initially motorists tended to ignore the signals but Police officers were stationed at the intersection and by the end of 1933 the situation was under control. The Road Transport Department was satisfied with the signals and in 1935 called tenders for the installation of signals at additional city intersections. The high prices tendered forced deferment of the plan.

The Police were not totally convinced of the value of the automatic signals. The Police accepted that the signals were useful in suburban areas but claimed that city traffic was best controlled by officers on point duty. In 1936 a plain clothes constable observed the Kent-Market street intersection for two 8 day stints and reported 293 motorists for ignoring the signals during his first vigil and 296 during the second. In between his two plain clothes stints the constable spent 8 days at the intersection in uniform and reported only 75 breaches. The experiment probably reinforced Police reservations but in 1936 Maddocks returned from a trip to the United States an enthusiastic advocate of installing the

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16. N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report, 1933-34, p. 28.
17. N.S.W. Police Department Report 1933-34, p. 5.
signals at most major intersections\textsuperscript{20}. The Government accepted Maddocks' view and by June 1937 signals had been installed at the intersections of York and Margaret streets, Erskine and Clarence streets and the intersection of Pyrmont Bridge Road with Booth Street and at its junction with Wattle Crescent and James Street\textsuperscript{21}. By mid 1939 21 sets of signals were operating in Sydney\textsuperscript{22}.

Pedestrian traffic also attracted attention. In 1934 jay walking became an offence punishable by a £10 fine. Crossings were marked at busy intersections to encourage pedestrians to cross in an orderly manner. Pedestrians apparently understood the increasing danger because in August 1935 a Pedestrians Protection Association was formed. A similar body already existed in Britain. One member of the Sydney Association explained that 'The motor vehicle is a modern necessity ... but it is also the engine of death, and from that aspect it must be regarded by the pedestrian.'\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand pedestrians failed to impress the authorities with the intelligence of their behaviour. In 1938 Bruxner blamed Sydney's 'barging' pedestrians for many of the city's traffic problems. Bruxner complained that his Department had attempted both to lead and to drive pedestrians but with little success. 'They wont use subways nor will they obey directions .... They take the short cut, and don't seem to care whether they get there alive or not.'\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{20} Daily telegraph, 6 May 1937, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 1938-39, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{23} Daily telegraph, 14 August 1935, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 5 July 1938, p. 2.
The need for safety education became more apparent as the traffic problem increased. In April 1930 an N.R.M.A. deputation asked the Education Minister, D.H. Drummond, to introduce safety education in schools, to finance the production of posters and other educational aids for use in schools, to establish safety patrols, to allocate £100 towards the cost of a safety film to be produced in cooperation with the N.R.M.A. and to appoint special officers to investigate the whole problem\textsuperscript{25}. Drummond agreed only to appoint an investigating officer but in May 1930 informed the R.A.C.A. that a safety campaign would be introduced in schools\textsuperscript{26}. Drummond also sanctioned a meeting attended by representatives of the N.R.M.A., R.A.C.A., the Inspectors Institute of N.S.W., Girl Guide and Boy Scout Associations, Federation of Parent and Citizens Associations, Royal Life Saving Society and Police and Education Departments which, in August 1930, appointed a sub committee to draw up detailed plans for a School Safety First League\textsuperscript{27}. The major innovation was the introduction of school street patrols, the first of which commenced duty at Newtown Public School in May 1932. Patrol members were issued with arm bands but lacked the power to halt traffic. The patrols were intended to prevent children crossing roads indiscriminately and to guide groups across the road during convenient breaks in the traffic\textsuperscript{28}. So successful

\textsuperscript{25} Open road, 17 April 1930, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{26} Sydney morning herald, 13 May 1930, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{27} Open road, 4 September 1930, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 12 May 1932, p. 10.
were the patrols that they were formed in all metropolitan schools at the end of 1932 and plans were laid to extend the system to all schools in New South Wales.\(^\text{29}\)

Education was not enough to stem the rising road toll and by the mid 1930s the public and the Government were seeking more effective measures. In 1936 the *Sydney morning herald* complained that '... the motor is regarded with an indulgent indifference which its daily record of slaughter does nothing to diminish.'\(^\text{30}\) However 'indulgent indifference' was giving way to stern attitudes. In Parliament J.W. Waddell advocated the lash for hit and run drivers\(^\text{31}\) while E.S. Solomon advocated similar punishment for drunken drivers\(^\text{32}\). Even J.C. Watson was moved to state that no punishment was too severe for the 'callous fiends' responsible for hit and run accidents\(^\text{33}\).

The Police introduced a graphic publicity campaign in 1935 centred around a poster intended to emphasise the full horror of road accidents. The N.R.M.A. objected that while 'A 'horror poster' ... may be arresting and forceful ... it would bring more harm than good by reducing sensitive law abiding motorists to such a state of nervousness that they might become accident prone.'\(^\text{34}\) Local government bodies also objected to the poster which was eventually withdrawn. Despite the setback the Police persisted with their campaign.

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29. Ibid., 8 December 1932, p. 1.
32. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 29 August 1935, p. 4.
In 1936 a Police Safety Committee was formed including representatives of other government departments, the motor trade and motorists' organisations. The Committee's campaign was financed through a Police Safety Campaign Ball, which raised £668/17/8, a beauty contest, which raised £383/0/2, and public donations amounting to £153/3/5. The Safety Campaign was formally opened on 2 April 1936 with the unveiling of a safety poster, so different from the horror poster as to be described by the *Open road* as 'magnificent', above the toll gates on the Harbour Bridge. The poster, with various captions, was also displayed on road side hoardings and in trams. At the opening ceremony the Chief Secretary, F.A. Chaffey, emphasised, that while the campaign was aimed at careless, reckless and dangerous drivers, pedestrians should remember their obligation to observe the traffic regulations.

Although the Police had taken the initiative in the safety campaign responsibility for the formulation of traffic policy lay with the Road Transport Department. In 1935 the Department had expressed concern that the accident rate was increasing at a faster rate than the number of motor vehicles. During his 1936 visit to the United States Maddocks learned that while the road toll was increasing there, it was increasing at a slower rate than the vehicle population. The Road Transport Department began to pay closer attention

35. N.S.W. Police Department *Report* 1936, p. 15.
What have I done!


Members of the Police Safety Campaign Committee with the campaign poster.
to the problem and at the opening of the Police Safety Campaign Bruxner announced that a conference would be convened to discuss safety measures. A Labor M.L.A. W.J. McKell, criticised the plan claiming that Bruxner should take advice only from the Police and Road Transport Departments. McKell may have been playing his part as an Opposition member with his criticism or perhaps advertising his confidence in the public service for electoral purposes. In any case the Conference appears to have been a clever device allowing Bruxner to forge a consensus on the necessity for unpalatable measures thus evading some of the opprobrium which is usually heaped on harsh traffic regulations.

The Road Safety Conference opened on 23 June 1936. The Conference resolved to appoint an executive committee, chaired by the Road Transport Commissioner, and five sub-committees, drawn from the members of the executive committee including the Police Commissioner, to consider the problems of traffic control, education, roads, vehicles and drivers. Recommendations from the sub-committees were considered by the executive committee which presented final recommendations to the general meetings of the Conference. Measures accepted by the full Conference were then forwarded to the Minister for Transport as recommendations.

The Conference moved quickly and in August the executive committee asked the acting Police Commissioner to report on the number of additional police officers needed to establish adequate traffic control. The acting Commissioner advised
that 3 cars, 4 cycles and 34 officers should be added to the force. At a general meeting J.C. Watson moved that the request be supported and Bruxner, who was also present, undertook to place the suggestion before Cabinet. Cabinet agreed to the reinforcements thus increasing the ability of the Police to enforce the traffic regulations.

The Conference also decided that a National Safety Week should be held. The Week commenced on 25 October 1936 and an intensive propaganda campaign was conducted through the press, on radio and by posters displayed in public places. In addition several processions were organised in the city and a number of functions were held in Martin Place. The Police also mounted a strict traffic law enforcement campaign. So successful were these efforts that the week was extended to a fortnight and it was proudly reported that only 8 deaths had been recorded during this period. Over the fortnight the weekly death rate fell to half the 1935 level. Despite the success of Safety Week it was not regarded as a long term solution to the accident problem.

Meanwhile the Safety Conference was considering many measures including the reintroduction of statutory speed limits. Britain had already reintroduced a 30 m.p.h. limit

38. Open road, 30 July 1936, p. 3.
in built up areas from 18 March 1935. Police Commissioner McKay informed the Conference that 'He had driven a lot in Great Britain, and the fear of the 30 mile limit law had held him in order, and would hold every other driver in order.'

Motorists' organisations opposed the reintroduction of speed limits. J.C. Watson claimed that the reduction in the number of accidents in Britain following the reintroduction of the speed limit should be attributed to vigorous traffic control by the police and not to the limit itself. According to Watson the major result of the speed limit was an increase in antagonism between motorists and the police. The limit had also produced a new class of nervous drivers and provoked an increase in reckless driving in unrestricted areas. Watson accepted that restrictions were necessary in dangerous areas but opposed general speed limits arguing that:

The world insists on speed.... It is our duty to cater for reasonable speed by providing adequate facilities. The few reckless drivers who cause most of the accidents can be amply cared for by the adequate enforcement of our existing laws.

The R.A.C.A. agreed that existing laws were adequate if properly enforced. The Club also feared that statutory limits would be adopted as regular speeds regardless of the prevailing conditions.

41. Plowden, op. cit., p. 287.
42. Open road, 31 December 1936, p. 1.
44. Ibid., 22 October 1936, p. 1.
45. Ibid., 31 December 1936, p. 1.
Generally support for the reimposition of speed limits was growing. The Safety Conference recommended the adoption of a 30 m.p.h. prima facie speed limit in built up areas with a 50 m.p.h. prima facie limit elsewhere. A motorist exceeding these limits would be guilty of an offence unless he could convince a court that his speed had been safe in the prevailing circumstances. The R.A.C.A. President, W.J. Bradley, complained that it was a reversal of British justice to throw the onus of proof on the defendant.\textsuperscript{46} Nevertheless Cabinet resolved to accept in principle the Conference's suggestion.\textsuperscript{47}

The Conference made recommendations on a number of other matters. The Conference bared its teeth on the subject of serious breaches of the regulations. It called for relentless application of existing penalties with magistrates giving definite consideration to the cancellation of licences in such cases. The Conference also recommended compulsory reporting of all accidents involving death, injury or property damage exceeding £5 to the Police. On the recommendation of the Conference regulations were gazetted requiring motorists to approach foot crossings at a speed which would enable them to stop if necessary, to yield right of way to pedestrians on marked crossings and to refrain from overtaking or passing another vehicle stopped at a crossing. Other regulations

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
forbad bicyclists to carry large items which affected their control over their cycles or to ride more than two abreast on public highways. Problems created by pedestrians were met by new regulations requiring pedestrians to walk on footpaths or, where no footpath was provided, to keep as near as possible to the right hand boundary of the carriageway so as to face on coming vehicles.

In 1937 it became clear that the safety campaign was in turmoil. The Police had agreed to abandon their safety campaign and participate in the Safety Conference but gained little satisfaction from the new campaign. According to the *Daily telegraph*\(^{48}\) Maddocks, supported by Bruxner, had so persistently squashed ideas put forward by the Police that the force boycotted the Conference. The Conference threatened to become a public scandal with much speculation surrounding the fate of the money raised for the Police Safety Campaign. However on 2 March 1937 Maddocks was suspended from duty following his arrest on a morals charge. Maddocks was subsequently convicted and imprisoned. C.M. Neale became acting Commissioner. Shortly after Bruxner left on an overseas trip.

On 6 April 1937 Premier Stevens announced the formation of the National Road Safety Council\(^{49}\). The Council, a citizens' body with official support, would take over the role

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49. Ibid., 7 April 1937, p. 1.
of the Conference and control safety education. The Minister for Transport was to be President of the Council and the Road Transport Commissioner Chairman. The Committee of the Council would include the Police Commissioner, the Lord Mayor, the Director of Education, the Main Roads Commissioner, the Railway Commissioner, and the Presidents of the N.R.M.A., the R.A.C.A. and the Motor Traders Association. The Police Safety Campaign funds were handed over to the Council.

The climax of the road safety movement was the introduction of Bruxner's Motor Traffic (Amendment) Bill. The measure became law shortly before Christmas 1937. A prima facie speed limit of 30 m.p.h. was imposed in built up areas, defined as streets with provision for street lighting, with a prima facie limit of 50 m.p.h. elsewhere. The Act increased penalties for serious traffic offences. The maximum penalty for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol or failing to stop after an accident in which any person was killed or injured was set at 12 months imprisonment and/or a fine of £100. A repetition of these offences, or of driving a vehicle recklessly, furiously or at a speed or in a manner dangerous to the public within five years, warranted automatic disqualification from holding a licence for between one and three years. Further, the provision allowing a court to issue a special permit to a driver whose licence had been suspended by another court was revoked.

The Motor Traffic (Amendment) Act was hailed as an immediate success. For the six months ending 30 June 1938 the number of accidents in built up areas decreased by 1%, the number of deaths by 3.7% and the number of injuries by 5.2%. Outside the built up areas accidents increased by 14.9%, deaths by 27.4% and injuries by 18.5%. The trends continued in 1938-39 with the number of accidents in built up areas decreasing by 7.6%, the number of deaths by 14.8% and the number of injuries by 4%. Outside the built up areas increases of 16%, 16% and 6.7% respectively were recorded. However, for the State as a whole, a 5.3% reduction in the number of accidents was recorded despite a 5.5% increase in the number of vehicles registered.

By the end of the 1930s it was clear that motor transport would remain a significant factor in New South Wales for some time to come. Some of the activity of the 1930s had curbed the advance of the motor vehicle. Commercial vehicles had been regulated and some progress had been made in curbing the accident rate. However, the introduction of safety education in schools indicated a realisation that future citizens needed to learn the survival techniques of the motor age. In addition the move to introduce third party insurance can be seen as an attempt to compensate the inevitable traffic victims. After four decades of rhetoric, punitive legislation and enforcement campaigns it was impossible to believe that traffic accidents could be completely eliminated.

51. N.S.W. Commissioner for Road Transport and Tramways Report, 1937-38, p. 32.
52. Ibid., 1938-39, p. 27.
CONCLUSION

The years between 1900 and 1937 were the formative period in the history of motor vehicles in New South Wales. When the Motor Traffic Amendment Act was passed in 1937 the capacity of motor transport, and the problems created by it, were well known. Future developments would occur within the framework of the laws, regulations and administrative arrangements formulated between 1900 and 1937.

By 1937 the motor vehicle was a proven means of transportation. In Sydney motor buses had replaced horse buses and few horse cabs and horse vans remained. Outside the capital motor traction was increasingly employed on tasks previously assigned to draught animals. Throughout the state private motorists were enjoying the convenience of the automobile. Governments had intervened to moderate the impact of motor transport on trains and trams. However motor vehicles were seen as a viable alternative to railed services for future development of transport services. Indeed the trams were to be replaced by publicly owned buses eventually. In some circumstances the more flexible motor vehicle offered clear advantages over trams and trains. In addition a considerable percentage of road revenue came from motor and petrol taxes. The legacy of loan repayments left by earlier railway construction served as a constant reminder of the comparative financial stresses of rail and road construction.
Debate on motoring matters was largely formalised by 1937. The Motor Traders Association and the National Roads and Motorists Association between them represented a broad spectrum of motoring interests. As effective pressure groups they sought to influence political and administrative decisions. Concurrently the government departments responsible for motoring matters were conducting research into problems and formulating policies. On any motoring question Governments could expect to hear the views of the pressure groups and the government departments. The large private and public bureaucracies were likely to contribute the most in any debate.

A comprehensive motor administration was built up between 1900 and 1937. The Motor Transport Department registered vehicles, licenced drivers, regulated commercial motor transport and formulated traffic policy. The Police Traffic Branch enforced traffic laws and regulations. The Main Roads Department controlled the construction and maintenance of the State's roads. J.T. Lang included these departments in a Ministry of Transport in 1932 but their autonomy was restored in the same year by the Stevens Government's Transport (Division of Functions) Act. However the work of the departments was still coordinated at ministerial level and together they formed a broadly based motor administration.

Motor administration was fully centralised by 1937. This arose from a series of responses to specific problems and was not the result of any master plan. Motor vehicles greatly
increased the volume of 'through traffic' which crossed one or more local boundaries to complete a journey. A uniform traffic code facilitated the movement of motor traffic whereas a variety of local regulations could only create confusion. It was logical to make the Police, an existing law enforcement agency, responsible for the enforcement of the traffic code. Furthermore officers restricted to local government areas could not have exercised adequate control over motor traffic. Only the state government had the power and the financial resources to build an adequate network of state highways. Motor administration conformed to the general trend towards centralisation in public administration but this appears to have been an apt solution.

Although New South Wales possessed a comprehensive motor administration in 1937 road accidents had not been eliminated. No where had traffic experts solved the motor accident problem and New South Welshmen had no magical solutions. Harsh new penalties were introduced in the Motor Traffic (Amendment) Act to deter drunken and reckless drivers. However the idea of severely restricting the number of drivers through rigorous licence testing, or by other criteria, found little favour. Attempts to devise a system of third party insurance recognised that the community would not abandon motor transport and that motor accident victims should receive some compensation. The road toll remained a problem for the future and ensured that the automobile would be regarded as a mixed blessing.
Perhaps the impact of the private motor car and the freeway during the 1960s and 1970s will provide the most dramatic chapters in the final history of motor transport in New South Wales. Nevertheless the years between 1900 and 1937 contain an important part of the story. It could be said that while New South Wales was not a motorised society, in the North American sense, in 1937 it had been transformed into a motor age state.
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