I SEE DEAD PEOPLE

LESSONS LEARNT FROM SEEING WAY TOO MANY

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Lessons learnt from seeing way to many

28 years of smashed up metal, evidence, and getting inside the driver's last few moments to make the system better

It’s not like TV.

Crash scenes are really **quiet** by the time I get there.

I don’t go to crash sites to see death.

I go to understand **what went wrong** – and how the system could be better next time, so those still here can get on with living.

EXPECT MISUSE

If you can imagine it – someone will probably try it

DO THE BASICS WELL

Do the low cost, obvious things first

DESIGN DIFFERENTLY

‘You can’t engineer for stupid’ - actually, we can. To a point, at least.

LOOK AFTER FAMILY

I’ve done a few things that go against popular opinion

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- **3 am test** – the early morning crowd will always find the weak spot in the system.
- **Pub-proximity test** – even the best of us lack some sensibility when crossing the road after a bevvy or two.
- **Burnout pad score** – Boy racers love a big, wide intersection.
- **Air time potential** – sealing a road with crests? Speeds will increase and low K value crests are a magnet for Boy racers.
- Some people will find a way to drive into or **crash into a worksite**.
- Some people just **never seem** to **figure out road rules.**
- Some people will **drive the wrong way** on a median-divided road.
- And sometimes, people are just a bit **distracted**, in a bit of a **rush**, or just plain **tired**.
- The **technology** in vehicles now can be good, but can be a distraction.
- **Not everyone grew up here** – tourists and immigrants bring their homeland driving skills, good and bad, to our networks.
- **Most of us did grow up here** – and it doesn't make us any better than tourists and immigrants. We just crash in higher numbers and sometimes for different reasons.

Note : Avoid the temptation to blame every crash on **phone use** and dismiss other possibilities. I have only had **one** in which it was **proven**.

DO THE BASICS WELL

Do the low cost, obvious things first

- Focus on **keeping drivers on the road** first.
- **Surface grip matters** – loose chip is like marbles and a slick surface is like ice.
- **Edges matter** – edgebreak, high lip, stepped shoulder, low shoulder increase crash risk, especially for motorcyclists.
- **ATP markings** – often the last line of defence for a sleeping or impaired driver.
- **Install what should be installed**, and check it for compliance.
- **Car headlights decide** – if signs aren't **reflecting**, they're **useless** at night.
- **Car drivers sit lower than ute drivers** – ensure Inspectors are cognisant of this.
- Provide **good cyclist facilities** – poor provision can be worse than none.
- **Visibility protects pedestrians** – provide good flood lighting at crossing points; put crossing facilities where people need them.
- **Review routes for no overtaking lines**, especially on detour routes.
- **Dedicated right turn bays** at intersections rather than a widened shoulder eliminates the choice of turning from the centreline or from the left. Inconsistent driver decisions lead to blockages and high speed rear-ends or head-ons can be the result.
- **Long stationary queues can damage surfaces** – check condition before reinstating the speed limit.

DESIGN DIFFERENTLY

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Focus areas:

- **Crossing the centreline** – hands down, the most frequent component. The difference between run off road and head on is just luck.
- **Trees and poles** – these kill people on impact at high speed.
- **Landscaping that blocks sight lines**, signs and lights. Put the plants elsewhere.
- **Vegetation that blocks access** behind barriers – think about the maintenance crews.
- **Culvert headwalls** - think 'slide and slam'.
- **Bends** – From 2020-2025, more than 30 % of Fatal and Serious crashes were on bends. Do what you can to design them well with good delineation and protection from hazards in run out zones.
- **Crown** – try to avoid an offset crown, especially on bends.
- **Camber** – try to avoid adverse camber, especially on shoulders on bends. High speed drivers will track wide onto the shoulder then overcorrect to the right.
- **Drainage features** – bowling alley gutter kerbs, risers.
- **Intersections** – simplify as much as possible.

Anticipate harmful outcomes and, **so far as is reasonably practicable**, design them out.

CAS maps only tell part of the story. Location is only as good as the satellite at the time, so treat it as a guide only. The god lies in the TCR.

LOOK AFTER FAMILY

Against popular opinion:

- **My kids have heard the truth** about what I do and what I see. And what their Dad does with FENZ.
- **We started teaching them to drive well before 16,** and this was in a 6-speed manual ute.
- **I went with them on their professional driving lessons**, and was grateful that they called out **reckless instructions**, such as 'unless there's an arrow board with a number on it, **drive the corner at 100 km/h**' and 'it's just a Give Way. They would have put a Stop sign in if you needed to stop; just approach the intersection with **no intention of stopping**'.
- When they were licenced, they **drove a lot.** I made them take **low standard roads as well as good ones**. This is about getting driving **experience** in a range of conditions while still **under parental guidance**. Taking the bus and biking may have been greener but would have sent them out into the world a lot less skilled.

They are both off on adventures now, in environments **more challenging than home** and I **hope I have taught them well** enough – the rest is up to them.

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