**SPEEDING**

* **DATA ANALYSED BY THE RSA FOR THE YEARS 2008 TO 2012 FOUND THAT SPEEDING IS *THE* SINGLE BIGGEST CONTRUBUTOR TO ACCIDENTS ON IRISH ROADS.**
* **SPEEDING IS DEFINED AS EXCEEDING THE SPEED LIMIT *OR* DRIVING AT AN INAPPROPRIATE SPEED FOR THE CONDITIONS OF THE ROAD*.***
* **IN THE CASE OF 32% OF ACCIDENTS IN THIS PERIOD SPEEDING WAS THE ACTUAL CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT EVEN WHERE THERE WERE OTHER FACTORS PRESENT LIKE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION OR MOBILE PHONE USAGE.**
* **AN INTERESTING FEATURE OF THESE STATISTICS IS THAT 56% OF THESE CASES WERE SINGLE VEHICLE COLLISIONS AND 91% OF THE VICTIMS WERE MALE. 85% OF THE VICTIMS WERE UNDER 34 YEARS OF AGE.**
* **THIS MEANS THAT 322 PEOPLE, OF WHICH MOST WERE YOUNG MEN, DIED DURING THAT TIME IN ACCIDENTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN PREVENTED BY THE CONTROL OF SPEEDING.**
* **IT IS NO SURPRISE TO THOSE WHO ANALYSE STATISTICS THAT MALES UNDER 35 ARE THE GROUP MOST LIKELY TO SPEED AND MOST LIKELY TO DIE BECAUSE OF IT.**
* **THE QUESTION IS WHAT CAN BE DONE TO BRING THESE FIGURES DOWN AND ARE WE DOING IT ADEQUATELY? I WILL ADDRESS THESE QUESTIONS WHEN I HAVE OUTLINED THE OTHER MAIN FACTORS IN IRISH ROAD ACCIDENTS.**

**ALCOHOL**

* **ALCOHOL IS STILL A MAJOR FACTOR IN ROAD DEATHS IN IRELAND CONTIBUTING TO 29% OF ROAD COLLISONS INVOLVING VEHICLES AND 9% OF PEDESTRIANS IN THE YEARS 2008-2012.**
* **THE LEGAL ALCOHOL LIMIT IS DEPENDENT ON WHETHER YOU HOLD A LEARNER PERMIT OR A FULL DRIVING LICENCE. AS A NOVICE DRIVER IF YOU HAVE MORE THAN 20MGS OF ALCOHOL PER 100 MILLITRES OF BLOOD YOU ARE OVER THE LIMIT. FOR FULLY LICENCED DRIVERS THE CORRESPONDING LIMIT IS 50MG.**
* **AS WITH SPEEDING THE MAJORITY OF THOSE KILLED IN COLLISONS WHERE THE DRIVERS HAD CONSUMED ALCOHOL OVER THE LEGAL LIMITS WERE MALE AND 74% OF THEM WERE UNDER THE AGE OF 34.**
* **HALF OF THOSE KILLED DURING THESE YEARS HAD CONSUMED OVER FOUR TIMES THE LEGAL LIMIT OF ALCOHOL.**
* **96 MOTORCYLCLISTS WERE KILLED IN THIS FIVE YEAR PERIOD AND OF THESE A SHOCKING 71% WERE OVER THE LEGAL LIMIT FOR ALCOHOL.**
* **DO THESE KIND OF FIGURES SHOCK PEOPLE? WELL, APPARENTLY NOT!**
* **IN JUNE 2016, A RED C Poll FOR THE PAT KENNY SHOW ON NEWSTALK SHOWED THAT ONE IN FOUR OF THOSE SURVEYED HAVE BEEN PASSENGERS IN A CAR WITH A DRUNK MOTORIST.**
* **MORE THAT 70% OF THOSE SURVEYED REVEALED THAT THEY HAD DIFFICULTY IN THE PAST ASSESSING WHETHER THEY WERE OVER THE LIMIT OR NOT THE MORNING AFTER CONSUMING ALCOHOL.**
* **ONE IN FOUR OF THESE THOUGHT THE ALCOHOL LIMIT WAS TOO LOW!**
* **THE RSA HAS LABELLED THE PROBLEM OF DRINK DRIVING IN IRELAND ‘A CHRONIC PROBLEM’ DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE OVERALL CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL IN IRELAND HAS FALLEN BY 24% SINCE 2001.**
* **AS WITH SPEEDING IT WAS MALES UNDER 34 WHO REPRESENTED THE MAJORITY OF THOSE KILLED IN THIS PERIOD.**

**SEATBELTS**

* **THE WEARING OF SEATBELTS BY DRIVERS HAS BEEN MANDATORY SINCE THE LATE 1970’S AND FOR PASSENGERS SINCE 1992 YET THE NON-WEARING OF SEATBELTS STILL FEATURES AS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN IRISH ROAD DEATHS.**
* **IN 2015, IN 30% OF ROAD DEATHS THE NON-WEARING OF SEATBELTS WAS A CONTRIBUTORY FACTOR.**
* **STUDIES IN SWEDEN AND THE USA HAVE SHOWN THE PROTECTIVE EFFECT OF SEATBELTS IN PREVENTING INJURY AND DEATH IS BETWEEN 63% AND 77% AT LOWER SPEEDS AND AT 48% TO 55% AT HIGHER SPEEDS.**
* **THE SIMPLE ACT OF WEARING A SEATBELT CAN HALVE YOUR RISK OF INJURY OR DEATH BUT THIS IS NOT ENOUGH TO DETER THOSE WHO DON’T OR WON’T COMPLY.**
* **IN DONEGAL EARLIER THIS YEAR A ROAD A ROAD SAFETY OFFICER WITH DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL HAS REVEALED THAT YOUNG DRIVERS IN THAT COUNTY ARE INSTALLING EXTRA SEAT BELT CLIPS IN THEIR CARS FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN TO PREVENT THE ALARM THAT SOUNDS WHEN DRIVERS FAIL TO BUCKLE UP.**
* **THE REASON GIVEN BY THESE DRIVERS IS THAT THE SEATING POSITION WITH THE SEATBELT ON IS TOO UNCOMFORTABLE!**
* **DONEGAL IS A COUNTY WITH A REPUTATION FOR MANY HORRIFIC ROAD DEATHS (THE WORST CRASH IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY HAPPENED IN DONEGAL IN 2010 WHEN EIGHT PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN THE ONE ACCIDENT-MOST OF THESE HAD NO SEATBELTS ON BECAUSE THE CAR WAS OVERCROWDED).**
* **MALE ARE LESS LIKELY TO COMPLY WITH THE LAW ON SEATBELTS THAN FEMALES (RSA OBSERVATIONAL SURVEY 2009). THIS SURVEY ALSO SHOWED THAT ONLY 34% OF MALES WORE THEIR SEATBELTS WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY ANOTHER MALE.**
* **HIGHER COMPLIANCE WAS NOTED AMONG THOSE DRIVING ON REGIONAL AND URBAN ROADS.**

**VULNERABLE ROAD USERS**

* **PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS AND MOTORCYCLISTS ARE VULNERABLE ROAD USERS. THEY ARE EXPOSED TO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC IN OVERCROWDED URBAN STREETS AND ON RURALL ROADS WHERE SPEEDING IS A PROBLEM.**
* **IN 2014 DEATHS AMONGST THIS GROUP ROSE BY 24% FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW. THE NUMBER OF CYCLISTS KILLED HAD RISEN FROM 5 TO 12 IN THAT PERIOD. THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBERS OF THOSE CYCLING HAS LED TO AN INCREASED RATE OF INJURY AND DEATH.**
* **IN 2016 TO DATE 10 CYCLISTS, 18 MOTORCYCLISTS AND 1 PILLION PASSENGER AS WELL AS 30 PEDESTRIANS HAVE BEEN KILLED ON IRISH ROADS.**
* **AS WITH CARS THERE ARE ‘BLACK SPOTS’ FOR CYCLISTS AND ALL OTHER VULNERABLE ROAD USERS. THE DUBLIN INQUIRER.COM HAVE CARRIED OUT A SURVEY THAT SHOWS THAT A CONCENTRATION OF ACCIDENTS HAVE HAPPENED AT THE JUNCTION NEAR THE DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL OFFICES ON WOOD QUAY (KAPILA L, O’BRIEN M, 2015).**
* **IN CONTRAST WITH OTHER CAR ACCIDENTS THE MAJORITY OF DEATHS AMONGST CYCLISTS ARE AMONGST MIDDLE-AGE MEN CYCLING IN URBAN AREAS (CSO 2015).**

**WHERE AND WHEN DO ROAD ACCIDENTS HAPPEN?**

* **DATA COLLECTED BY THE RSA IN 2015 SHOWS THAT SUNDAY IS THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME OF THE WEEK TO BE ON THE ROADS.**
* **THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF FATALITIES OCCURRED BETWEEN 10AM AND 12PM AND 2PM AND 4PM.**
* **IN THE THREE YEARS FROM 2013 TO THE END OF 2015 MOST ROAD FATALITIES OCCURRED DURING THE MONTH OF JULY.**
* **CORK AND DUBLIN ARE THE COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST RATE OF FATAL ACCIDENTS AND COUNTY DONEGAL CONTINUES TO HAVE A HIGHER THAN AVERAGE FATALITY RATE.**
* **THE ROAD NETWORK IN CORK AND DONEGAL POSE A PROBLEM FOR GARDAI AS RURAL ROADS ARE WIDELY DISPERSED AND SPEEDING IS A PERSISTENT PROBLEM WHICH IS HARD TO COMBAT DUE TO DECREASED RESOURCES.**
* **IN DONEGAL AN RSA REPORT CONCLUDED THAT MOST SPEED-RELATED CRASHES IN THE COUNTY OCCURRED ON REGIONAL ROADS IN 80 KM/H ZONES OR NATIONAL ROADS SUCH AS THE N13.**

I will talk a little about an innovative programme devised to address the causes of antisocial driving in County Donegal. It is called the Pro-Social Drivers Programme, a road safety initiative which was started in 2012 by a group of volunteers and which seeks to improve the driving behaviour of some of the higher risk groups of drivers. Candidates for the course are initially identified through the courts system and the legal system and commit to completing a course consisting of four three-hour lectures and classes. It has been found that it is personal factors that are the main causes of riskier behaviour in driving. For this reason there is a focus within the course on social responsibility, emotional control, driving under the influence and the consequences of antisocial driving behaviour. Those involved with the programme even work with reputable international experts in the areas of criminal recidivism and driver rehabilitation to further develop the course and advise on overall content and delivery. Pro-Social Ireland won the 2015 Social Entrepreneurs Ireland impact award for its work on the Pro-Social Drivers Programme and has also been honoured with an award from the Irish Road Victims Association for its work in road danger reduction. Programmes such as this are successful because they believe in rehabilitation, working with those who have previously engaged in dangerous driving. The programme has been so successful that it is being rolled out in some of the Border counties, which is important. We should look at rolling it out across the country. I think there are extremely low - practically zero - recidivism rates for participants in the course. Figures I saw late last year showed that out of more than 100 participants not one had appeared back before the courts for any driving offence. That is very important.

We need to look also at the greater context and consider the fact that there has been a reduction in the number of gardaí in the traffic corps. The number posted to it dropped by 5% in the 18 months to May this year. There were 711 officers assigned to it in May compared to 749 at the end of 2014. The RSA has repeatedly called in recent years for the Garda traffic corps to be strengthened in order to deter dangerous driving. The decrease is due to continuous budget cuts imposed on An Garda Síochána. The budget to be announced in October must seriously redress this issue and reverse the trend.

This week the Donegal road safety plan for the period 2016 2021 was launched. I welcome the report which was a collaborative effort by the Donegal road safety working group, an inter-agency group consisting of Donegal County Council, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, An Garda Síochána, the Road Safety Authority, Donegal Youth Service, Donegal Education and Training Board, ETB, the Pro-Social Drivers Programme and the National Ambulance Service. I hope this collaborative effort will help to reduce the number deaths on roads in the county, with similar efforts being made across the country.

On the larger and more complex nature of social exclusion and marginalisation, we need a targeted effort and greater political will to invest in programmes such as the Pro-Social Drivers Programme and repeat its success across a number of fronts. There have been many reports carried out on the marginalisation of men in Border counties. It is well established that young men suffer from marginalisation in rural counties, particularly along the Border. The Irish Central Border Area Network produced a report in 2008 entitled, Men's Health in Ireland, which referenced the issues affecting socially isolated men in rural communities - educational disadvantage, social isolation, weak employment opportunities and a lack of access to health care. It clearly stipulated the strategies needed to target this specific cohort. However, austerity has exacerbated the problem further and prevented vital projects from reaching out to more young men at risk.

Although the Bill addresses the policing elements of road safety, provides for the mechanics of how they can be implemented and increases offences and their reporting, they all happen after the fact. We should target the young people who feel marginalised and provide a programme for them to build their sense of social responsibility and take them back into society in order that they will not feel they are outside it. They should not view driving and the way they behave in cars fatalistically. If they offend, they should expect something to happen as a consequence. They should have a sense of their own value and the value they have in society. That would go a long way towards addressing many of the road safety issues that need to be dealt with.