

## OBITUARY

## Obituary: Gordon Trinca, Australian road trauma advocate

Gordon Trinca, whose visionary road safety crusade led to the introduction of pioneering legislation in Victoria that rippled across Australia and internationally, has died aged 88. Trinca was chairman of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' influential road trauma committee from 1975 to 1993, and played a key role in gaining the support of politicians and decision-makers to implement measures to reduce the road toll. As a surgeon he was aware of the horror of road crashes from the late 1950s, but became more concerned in the 1960s and eventually got "fed up with stitching up" victims while there were no meaningful moves by government to reduce the carnage, so he started collecting statistics. Under his direction, surgeons were no longer "on call" at home, but at the hospital ready to make the all-important first assessment of a trauma case. Trinca himself set the example by spending long hours at the hospital at peak crash times. Later research was to show conclusively how important early treatment was for the better recovery of trauma victims.

Colleague Jim McGrath said in tribute: "Without doubt Gordon Trinca was the dominant force in the [College of Surgeons] road trauma work. His tremendous enthusiasm and drive inspired all of us." As a direct result of campaigning by Trinca and a small group of like-minded concerned citizens, Victoria led the world with the introduction of compulsory seatbelt legislation in December 1970. Much more was to follow, with stricter seatbelt legislation, helmets for cyclists, blood alcohol tests, speed limits, improved vehicle design, safety equipment, road improvement, lowered blood alcohol levels for drivers and, vitally, education.

A question he posed almost 20 years ago continues to resonate, albeit with slightly different figures: "Can we afford the \$6.5 billion, the 2% of GDP and the 10% of total hospital resources that traffic injury consumes each year in Australia?" He had prefaced the question by stating: "Our society can ill afford the loss of human life and productivity and the cost of resources required to repair the damage to body and machine." Statistics show the achievement. From 1960 to 1994 road fatalities for Australia declined by 49%, with fatalities per 100 000 people falling from 30 in 1970 to 10.9 in 1994 (for Victoria it was 8.4 in 1994), this decline occurring despite increased

population and increased numbers of motor vehicles. There was a similar diminution of serious injuries from road crashes.

Trinca became an internationally known figure respected for his work in road trauma. One outcome of this was a group of eight people in the field from different parts of the world who grouped together in 1985 to form the Global Traffic Safety Trust. Informally known as "Trinca's Thinkas", the group developed a project and wrote a book, *Reducing Traffic Injury—A Global Challenge*. Their work received the prestigious 1988 international Volvo Traffic Safety Prize, which led to the establishment of a trust.

Trinca received many honours and awards, including a Medal in his name from the Royal College of Surgeons and an annual lecture of the Australasian Trauma Society.

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## CALENDAR

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### 18th International Conference on Safe Communities. Community Safety Policies as an Axis for Development

13–15 August 2009, Cali, Colombia. The conference focuses on the generation of safety policies as an axis for development. It is of importance to governors, researchers, academicians, community leaders and private-public entrepreneurs, who are the generators of safety and development public policies. Further information from <http://bit.ly/safecom2009>.

### Sports Safety Conference

3–5 September 2009, Magglingen, Switzerland. The goals of the 5th tri-national conference of the leading German-speaking organisations on research and prevention of sports accidents are to exchange scientific information and develop strategies and measures associated with sports accident prevention. Further information: <http://bit.ly/sportconf>.

### International Research Council on the Biomechanics of Injury

9–11 September 2009, York, UK. Further information: <http://bit.ly/ircobi>.

### 2nd Injury Prevention Conference for the UK and Ireland

24–25 September 2009, Cardiff, UK. The conference will focus on the prevention of injuries to children and young adults including those from accidents, violence and self harm. It will highlight evidence of

good practice and successful implementation of programmes, and will focus on how the knowledge, policy or intervention in the presentation is, or will be useful for injury prevention practitioners and policy makers. Further information: <http://bit.ly/uk2conf>.

### Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine 53rd Annual Conference

4–7 October, 2009, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Further information: <http://www.aaam1.org/annual/program.pdf>.

### XXV World Congress on Suicide Prevention

27–31 October 2009, Montevideo, Uruguay. The theme of the congress of the International Association for Suicide Prevention is "Suicide Prevention in Different Cultures". Further information: <http://bit.ly/suicideconf>.

### Road Safety 2020: Smart Solutions, Sustainability, Vision

5–6 November 2009, Perth, Australia. The 2009 annual conference of the Australian College of Road Safety focuses on advances in technology, research advances and solutions (smart systems), and high risk road users (eg motorcycles, youth) and current issues. Further information: <http://bit.ly/acrs2009>.

### 19th International Safe Communities Conference

23–26 March 2010, Suwon, Korea. The theme of the conference is "Sustainability of Safe Community Programs". For information, contact [jpcho@ajou.ac.kr](mailto:jpcho@ajou.ac.kr).

### Safety 2010. 10th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Control

21–24 September 2010, London, UK. The key theme of the conference is "Safe and Equitable Communities", chosen because levels of almost all types of injuries fall more heavily on poorer communities. Such differences are apparent within countries, between countries and even between global regions. While there is a clear pressure to make all communities safe, the conference will bring special attention to the need to consider equity in prioritising actions and identifying those most at need and most likely to benefit from safety initiatives. For further information, to submit an abstract and to register, visit <http://www.safety2010.org.uk>.

## CORRECTION

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Miller M, Barber C, Azrael D, *et al.* *Injury Prevention* 2009;15:183–7. In the Results section of the abstract, the last sentence should end "... lived in a home without firearms" (not "with").