

Tackle the bad drivers says AGSI

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Garda Traffic Units should be used as a means of improving bad road behaviour, and not just acting as a cash generator for Government, according to the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors.

The association has also called for the introduction of an educational scheme to eliminate the scourge of the boy racers.

The Association makes the points in a hard-hitting submission to a special group set up within An Garda Síochána to map out a strategic plan on traffic nationwide.

In the submission AGSI spells out that:

- traffic units are under-resourced for the job they are expected to do
- traffic personnel are frequently switched to other duties
- traffic law enforcement is not given a sufficiently high profile by garda management
- high profile traffic policing acts as a deterrent to other crime
- there is a need for improved vehicles and computer back-up

The AGSI states strongly that the aims should be:

- to continually reduce our unacceptably high levels of road fatalities and serious accidents
- to foster an ethos of good road behaviour in all road users
- to ensure that bad road behaviour does not go unpunished
- to ensure that all road vehicles are roadworthy and meet legal requirements
- to ensure that every driver is legally qualified.

“We have made this submission to the Garda Síochána Strategic Planning Working Group on Traffic because many of our members are extremely concerned at the lack of support by senior garda management for traffic units working on the ground,” said the President of AGSI, Mr Joe Dirwan. “Too many of our units are working with too few members, in old vehicles and without sufficient computer and clerical support.”

Mr Dirwan pointed out that in this country 4% of the force is deployed on traffic duties. "In the UK that figure goes up to 8 – 9%." Similarly traffic accidents cost around €700 million annually while crime costs €73 million. "On the basis of those figures alone, more resources should be devoted to traffic," said Mr Dirwan.

There is a need for an educational course in driving at Leaving Certificate or Transition Year to tackle the problem of young reckless drivers. "Such a course could help to reduce the high accident rate for young drivers and could also have the knock-on effect of reducing insurance costs," he added.

His association has made an extensive submission to the Strategic Group containing these points and many others, he concluded.