

Vehicle drivers must concentrate

Attacking proposed changes in road traffic law, the editor says (p 885 *ante*) that people do not intend to drive carelessly, that it is 'mere inadvertence' when they do so, and that the consequences of bad driving are usually a matter of chance. This underplays the vital importance of full concentration by drivers on what they are doing, which is propelling a potentially lethal machine in a public place.

The reality is that drivers do intend to drive carelessly whenever they intentionally do anything which lowers their ability to drive safely. This applies to intentionally letting their attention stray from the road conditions, as by day-dreaming or engaging in argument with the car's occupants. It applies to intentionally impairing their view of road incidents, as by hanging a swaying toy against the windscreen. It applies to intentionally interfering with their ability to hear ambulance, fire or police sirens, warning horns or unusual engine noise, as by concentrating on a radio, CD or telephone. It applies to intentionally setting off in a vehicle which they know has defective tyres or brakes. And so on.

The world out there is unpredictable, and needs 100% concentration from drivers. Whether or not they give that concentration is under the control of their will. Learning to concentrate at all times is an important part of learning to drive. If you don't intend to concentrate, then you intend to drive carelessly.