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Lollipop Workers? Really, 7News? Time to Raise the Standard.

Let's get one thing straight: traffic controllers are not "lollipop workers." They are trained safety professionals working long hours, in sometimes dangerous conditions, to keep every single road user (pedestrians, drivers, cyclists, tradies, and yes, even journalists) safe from harm.

So when we saw 7News' article published on 21 July 2025 sensationalising traffic controller pay and reducing these professionals to a punchline, we weren't just disappointed. We were appalled.

Let's break it down:

Disrespect Has Consequences

Language matters. Calling traffic controllers "lollipop workers" might get clicks, but it also chips away at the respect they deserve. And when public respect drops, compliance drops. That's not a theory; it's backed by data.

According to the **2024 TMAA Traffic Controller Safety Survey**, nearly half of all traffic controllers (49%) have reported near-misses with distracted drivers, and 44% have had close calls with speeding vehicles. These are not minor brushes with danger. These are the frontline stories of people risking their lives to manage unpredictable environments.

And let's not gloss over the harshest reality. Up to 20 traffic controllers are estimated to die on Australian roads each year. This isn't a profession that deserves ridicule. It deserves recognition and support.

Clickbait in Hi-Vis

Now let's talk numbers. \$206,000 per year? Sounds incredible because it is. It's clickbait, pure and simple, especially for a casual workforce that works nights, weekends, and public holidays in conditions most Australians would avoid.

Let's be clear: overtime rates, remote locations, last-minute shifts, and casual employment conditions inflate individual pay packets in unique, high-demand scenarios. But claiming these salaries are typical is like saying all journalists earn Hollywood-anchor money because one got a Netflix deal.

And while we're at it - while 7News pretends to question wage fairness, the article also includes ads for job placement apps. So what is it really? Journalism or just dressed-up advertising?

Do Better

To all journalists interested in traffic management: the next time you want to write about traffic controllers, start by visiting a worksite. Stand there for 10 hours in the sun or rain. Field abuse from impatient drivers. Stay alert for the distracted ones doing 70 in a 40 zone. Then ask yourself: should the story be about traffic controller pay, or about the verbal and physical abuse happening on our roads?

We are proud of our industry. We are proud of our members. And we expect better from our media.

Matthew Bereni

Chief Executive Officer

Media contact: tmaa@tmaa.asn.au