



Media Release

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Police vital to changing road user attitudes

RAC today gave evidence to the Parliamentary Committee investigating the methods of evaluating WA Police traffic enforcement and road safety performance.

RAC General Manager Corporate Affairs, Will Golsby, said road safety was a shared responsibility however WA Police, as the agency responsible for enforcement, was a unique driver of road safety outcomes.

“Traffic enforcement is a vital link to lowering road fatality rates in WA and in driving fatality rates towards zero,” Mr Golsby said.

Safe Road Use and Safe Speeds are two cornerstones of Towards Zero, WA’s Road Safety Strategy which, over the life of the Strategy from 2008 and 2020, will account for almost half the projected injury savings. Police and traffic enforcement is a central and vital strategy to maintaining and changing road user attitudes.

RAC believes greater openness and transparency of detailed performance reporting by WA Police will only strengthen the community’s understanding and confidence that the most effective road safety strategies in reducing the social and economic impact of road trauma in our State are identified, implemented and continued.

Research by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) reinforces the primary role of policing in reducing fatality rates in all Australian states over the past forty years.

The research concluded that seat belt use, random breath testing (RBT) and speed cameras were the effective factors in the very substantial declines in fatality rates.

“Last year, 186 Western Australians lost their lives on our roads. On average, every two days someone learns that a loved one, be it a parent, partner, sibling, child or friend, has been killed in a road crash.

“WA’s road safety record is improving, but not as quickly as it could be.”

WA’s annual fatality rate at the end of 2014 was 7.2 fatalities per 100,000 persons. This is above the national rate of 5.0 and well above Victoria’s national leading rate of 4.3. Other Australian states have reached lower fatality rates more quickly and have sustained them.

In summary, RAC raised a number of issues as part of the Inquiry including:

- Enforcement is a core road safety initiative and Police, as the agency responsible for enforcing WA’s traffic laws and regulations, are therefore a principal and unique driver of road safety outcomes.
- Police’s commitment to road safety should be reflected in key performance measures including with the Minister for Road Safety, for both Police as an agency and for senior leadership within the organisation.

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- In noting the non-exclusive relationship between traffic enforcement and road safety outcomes, road safety outcome measures should be qualified by intermediate measures, which capture the impact of traffic enforcement on road user attitudes as well as behaviour.
- Access to high level enforcement input and activity data will reassure the community that, in acknowledgement of the impact of road trauma on the lives of Western Australians, Police are meeting the expectation that traffic enforcement services are being prioritised alongside other operational activities and consistently provided.
- Data about enforcement activity is already collected as part of existing administrative data collection systems, and only a modest cost would apply for WA Police to produce a comprehensive report in a timely manner.
- Robust reporting and tracking of enforcement information is critical in identifying those road safety strategies that will be most effective in reducing the social and economic impact of road trauma in our State.

The submission is available online at <http://rac.com.au/news-community/news-and-reports/reports>

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