

# National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020

RAC's Submission on the Inquiry into the National  
Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020

**March 2018**



**For the better**

# Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the *Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020* (Inquiry). RAC is pleased to provide this response on behalf of its one million Western Australian members.

## About RAC

We are the leading advocate on the mobility issues and challenges facing our State and we work collaboratively with all levels of Government and other organisations to ensure Western Australians can move around using safe, accessible and sustainable mobility options. Western Australia (WA) is a signatory to the *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020* (NRSS) which in turn is aligned with the United Nations' *Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020*. RAC has an active role in the WA Road Safety Council as a representative of all road users as well as in other road safety related committees and working groups, including as a member of the Western Australian Black Spot Consultative Panel. RAC is also a signatory of the State's road safety strategy, *Towards Zero*.

The NRSS, released in 2011, provides a framework for national collaboration to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured (KSI) on our roads. Central to its aims is that there should be no deaths or serious injuries as a result of traffic crashes. Underpinning the NRSS and WA's road safety strategy are the safe system cornerstones, that is, safe road use, safe roads and roadsides, safe speeds, and safe vehicles must work together to reduce deaths and serious injuries. Strong evidence supports these cornerstones, as well as the approach that a longer-term strategy implemented through a series of short-term action plans is the most effective way to achieve dramatic reductions in KSI.

Based on the safe system cornerstones, the NRSS represents the commitment of government across all levels to reduce Australia's annual number of road deaths and serious injuries



by at least 30 per cent by 2020. In WA's road safety strategy, the target was to see up to 11,000 fewer people killed or seriously injured on WA roads, a reduction of up to 40 per cent on the average number of people killed and seriously injured between 2005 and 2007.

Since the release of the NRSS in 2011, a number of reviews, interim action plans and implementation status reports have preceded this current Inquiry. This latest Inquiry is an opportunity to examine the disparate rates of improvement across the states and territories and consider that while the national road toll may be on the decline, it is certainly not at the targeted rate set in the NRSS and agreed to by its national, state, local and industry counterparts.

The Australian Automobile Association (AAA) revealed that the vast majority of safety performance indicators were not likely to be met, with December 2017 recording the worst month of road fatalities in six years for the nation. By the end of 2017, WA lagged behind the rest of the nation with a fatality rate of 6.16 per 100,000 persons, when the national fatality rate was 4.98. In 2017, more than half of fatal crashes (57 per cent) in WA occurred in rural and regional areas and RAC's own preliminary analysis showed that these crashes were dominated by 'single

vehicle run off road' type crashes, occurring on roads with speed limits of 110km/hour. Vulnerable road user groups made up 29 per cent of fatalities in 2016, with motorcyclists accounting for a third of fatalities in metropolitan Perth and 12 per cent of fatalities in regional WA, disproportionately higher than their share of licensed motorised vehicles at approximately 6 per cent.

This Inquiry is timely and includes four broad points in the Terms of Reference. First, to identify key factors involved in KSI trends, second, review the effectiveness of the NRSS and supporting 2015-2017 Action Plan, third, identify issues and priorities for post 2020 NRSS and 2018-2020, and finally, to advise on the arrangements for the management of road safety and the NRSS.

Having considered the State's road safety record, the State's road safety strategy *Towards Zero*, and the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, RAC has opted to focus its submission under the following broad headings. They are:

- › Governance and Accountability;
- › Execution and Implementation; and
- › Outcome Monitoring.



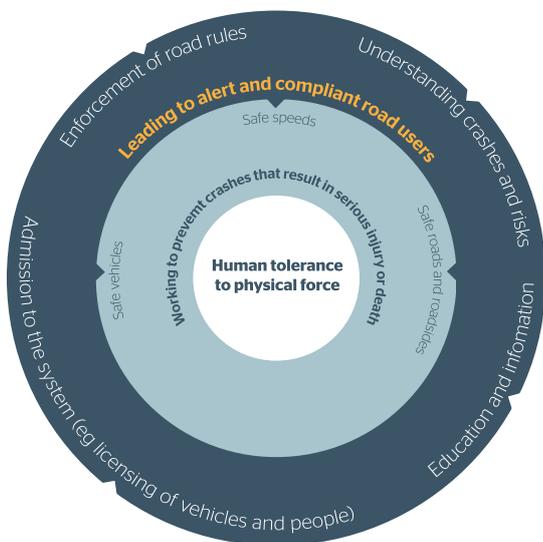
## Governance and accountability

The management of road safety has proved to be challenging and complex for reasons including the fact that different government agencies are responsible for varying cornerstones of the safe system framework and the behaviour of individuals cannot be wholly regulated.

An effective governance structure, supported by shared and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is essential to the good management of road safety. Government agencies across all levels must be held accountable for their share of improvements that are required to prevent unnecessary deaths and serious injuries caused by road crashes.

Road trauma is pervasive and impacts not only the immediate family, who must mourn the sudden loss or serious injury of a loved one, but it also has broader social and economic ramifications. RAC's own analysis based on publically available data and reports has shown that in the last ten years, road trauma has incurred the avoidable cost of \$921 million to the State's health system alone. This figure does not include the burdensome cost of injury over the course of a person's life, catastrophic injuries and the cost to other public agencies such as WA Police and Main Roads WA (MRWA).

Figure 1 » The safe system



Good governance and clear KPIs are important to the good management of road safety to reduce KSI, however, evidence shows that the lack of those structures and functions has been an impediment to the accelerated reduction of KSI in Australia, especially in WA.

In Peter Browne's 2014 *Review of Road Safety Governance in Western Australia* (Browne Review), he concluded that the first priority must be the establishment of a new governance model. Specifically, he noted that there was confusion relating to reporting lines and approving Ministers. In 1995, "road safety was primarily a transportation issue and that the responsibility should sit with the Minister (...) of Transport and Road Safety"<sup>1</sup>

Further in 2002, for unknown reasons, the Office of Road Safety was relocated to the Minister for Police while it remained a business unit within MRWA, in part reflecting that WA Police held the primary responsibility for road safety. It was further complicated by the fact that the major recipient of the Road Trauma Trust Account, which the Office of Road Safety was coordinating through the Road Safety Council was MRWA, was signed off by the Minister for Transport, responsible for the Transport Portfolio including MRWA.

Since the Browne Review, a number of changes have occurred and the Office of Road Safety became the Commission for Road Safety, an independent agency reporting directly to the Minister for Police, however the Road Safety Commission has now merged with the WA Police as part of the Machinery of Government changes, and reports still to the Minister for Police and Road Safety.

In 2017, RAC commissioned the Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre to survey road safety experts representing government, non-government, road safety and transport agencies, and research organisations to examine the key factors contributing to the discrepancy in fatality rates between WA and Victoria between 2000 and 2015. From this study, it was identified that "road safety governance" was the highest ranked reason for WA's comparatively slower improvement in road safety compared to Victoria, with 73.8 per cent of responses stating they highly agree.

RAC supports the AAA which, in its *National Road Safety Strategy Progress Report* has called on the Inquiry Advisory Panel to recommend the reinstatement of the Federal Office of Road Safety to be responsible for the development and implementation of integrated national road safety strategies and programs as well as national road safety research and data collection. This must be further supported by a complementary governance structure with clear accountability measures at the state and local government levels.

### RAC calls on the Inquiry Advisory Panel to recommend:

- › The reinstatement of the Federal Office of Road Safety, which is responsible for the development and implementation of integrated national road safety strategies and programs as well as national road safety research;
- › Key performance measures on road safety gains across senior leadership at ministerial and departmental level for all three levels of government;
- › The establishment of cohesive and comparable data collection mechanisms allowing state and territory government agencies to benchmark both statistics and programs against shared KPIs and metrics to explicitly track and measure reduction in KSI; and
- › A realignment of the WA Road Safety Commission so that a Commissioner reports to a Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee rather than a Minister.

<sup>1</sup>Peter Browne Consulting, (2014), "A Review of Road Safety Governance in Western Australia"

## Execution and implementation

In addition to the issues regarding governance and accountability, RAC believes that a bolder approach to adopting, executing and implementing solutions is required should genuine and accelerated improvements to the road safety record be made. The acceptance of a stronger, bipartisan, and more agile approach may remedy a history of inaction where solutions have been implemented too slowly, or on too small a scale.

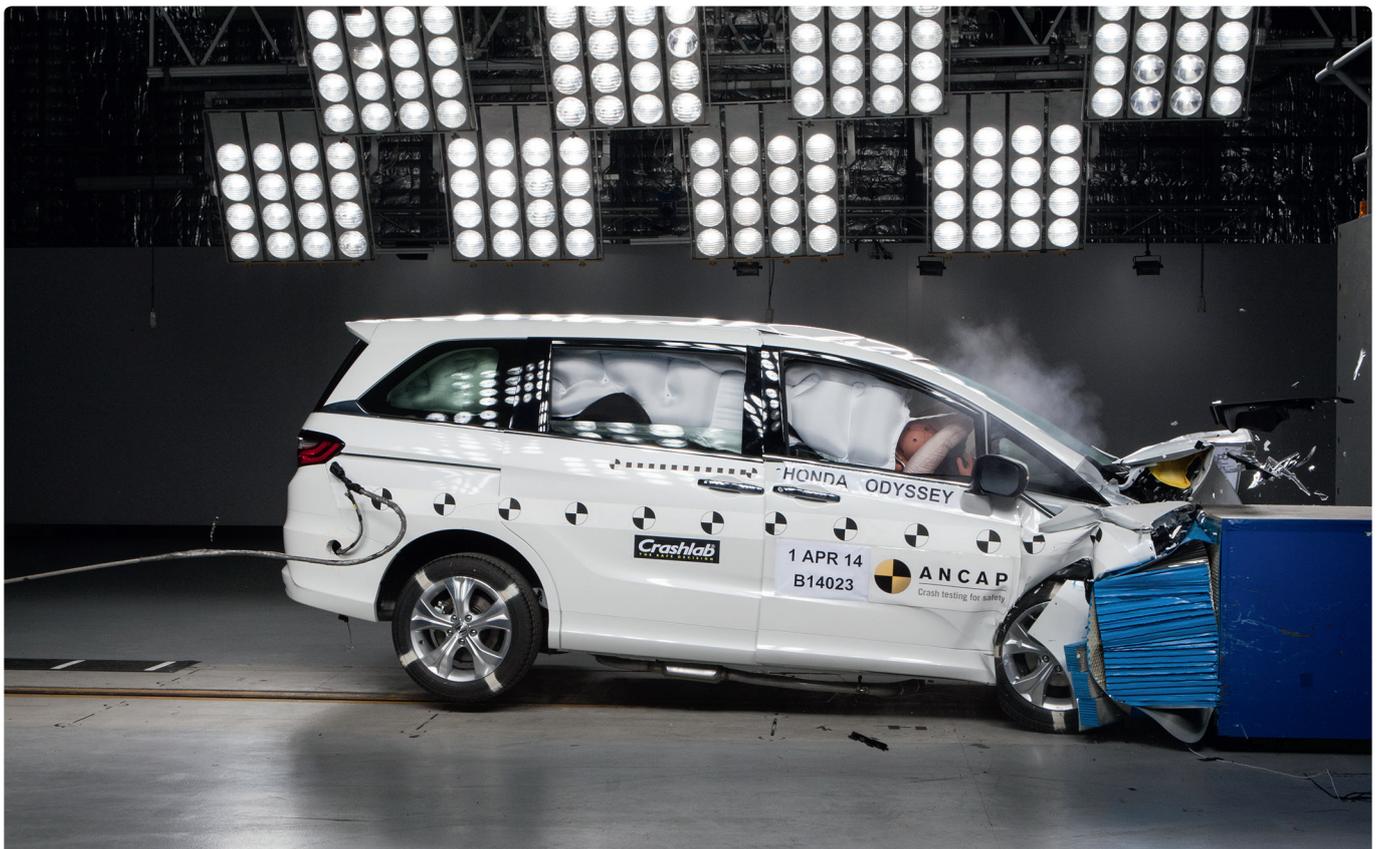
There are a number of examples where the savings in KSI rates have not been realised due to inaction or slow adoption. For instance, although the retention of an older Australian vehicle fleet is known to have a negative impact on KSI, the NRSS's *Implementation Status Report* acknowledges that there has been no change to the national fleet age of 10 years and recent analysis by the AAA found that more than 1,300 lives would be saved over the next 20 years if the national light vehicle fleet age was reduced by just one year. Should taxes and tariffs be lowered, it would encourage the uptake of new and safer vehicles.

Safe vehicles is one of the four cornerstones and are a critical road safety strategy aimed at both encouraging the development of safer and more efficient vehicle technologies, and by setting minimum standards to assure the safety credentials of imported vehicles. The process for setting standards must be more flexible and dynamic enough to accommodate and encourage rapid technical change and

strategic enough to progressively facilitate a lifting of the baseline vehicle safety standards and ultimately vehicle safety features over time. It is disappointing then that the time currently taken to examine new regulatory proposals and implement them as Australian Design Rules remains far too protracted.

Further, in 2016, 59 per cent of fatal and 40 per cent of serious motorcycle crashes in WA were single vehicle run off road type crashes, and were antilock braking systems or advanced braking systems (ABS) installed they could have intervened in approximately 93 per cent of these critical situations.<sup>2</sup> In RAC's 2017 survey of motorcycle usage, only 43 per cent of respondents stated their motorcycles were fitted with ABS brakes.<sup>3</sup> The Australian Government announced that ABS would need to be mandatory under the Australian Design Rules from November 2019. This proposed timeframe will be nearly four years after the European Union implemented it in January 2016 and a study by the Monash University Accident Research Centre from 2015 demonstrated the effectiveness of motorcycle ABS.

The Western Australian Auditor General identified that WA was facing an \$845m road maintenance backlog in 2009 and although between 2011 and 2015, the backlog was greater than \$1 billion, in 2016, it remained near the \$850 million figure. It is widely recognised that across the State, the condition of the regional road network is in decline. Narrow seal, poor surface condition and hazardous roadsides are common complaints from regional road users.



<sup>2</sup>B. Fildes, S. Newstead, M. Fitzharris, and L. Budd, (2015), 'Evaluation of the effectiveness of Anti-Lock Braking Systems on motorcycle safety in Australia', Monash University Accident Research Centre  
<sup>3</sup>RAC WA, (2018), 'Motorcycle User Survey'

RAC partners with other Australian automobile clubs and the Australian Government to rate roads for road safety using the Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) star rating system. Safe roads with design elements such as divided carriageways, good line marking, audible edge lines and sealed shoulders have a higher star rating. Lower-rated roads are likely to be undivided with poor line marking and roadside hazards such as trees, poles and embankments. In 2013, 4,671 kilometres of WA's National Highways were star rated for safety. Five per cent of the network was rated as 1-star and 22 per cent was rated as 2-star. The majority (57 per cent) of road links in the State were rated as 3-star and 16 per cent were rated as 4-star. No highways were rated as 5-star. It is an alarming revelation and significant risk to the road users of WA that 27 per cent of WA's National Highway Network recorded an AusRAP star rating of just one or two stars.

A *Safer Roads Investment Plan* which was developed for WA identifies that with the implementation of selected road safety treatments, WA would save approximately 4,150 lives and serious injuries over a period of 20 years. If fully implemented, this would cost just \$450 million with a high benefit-cost ratio of 4.18. Fully implementing the Investment Plan would reduce the proportion of 1-star rated roads from five per cent to one per cent. Two-star rated roads would decrease from 22 per cent to 14 per cent. The proportion of 3-star (66 per cent) and 4-star (19 per cent) roads would increase to 85 per cent.

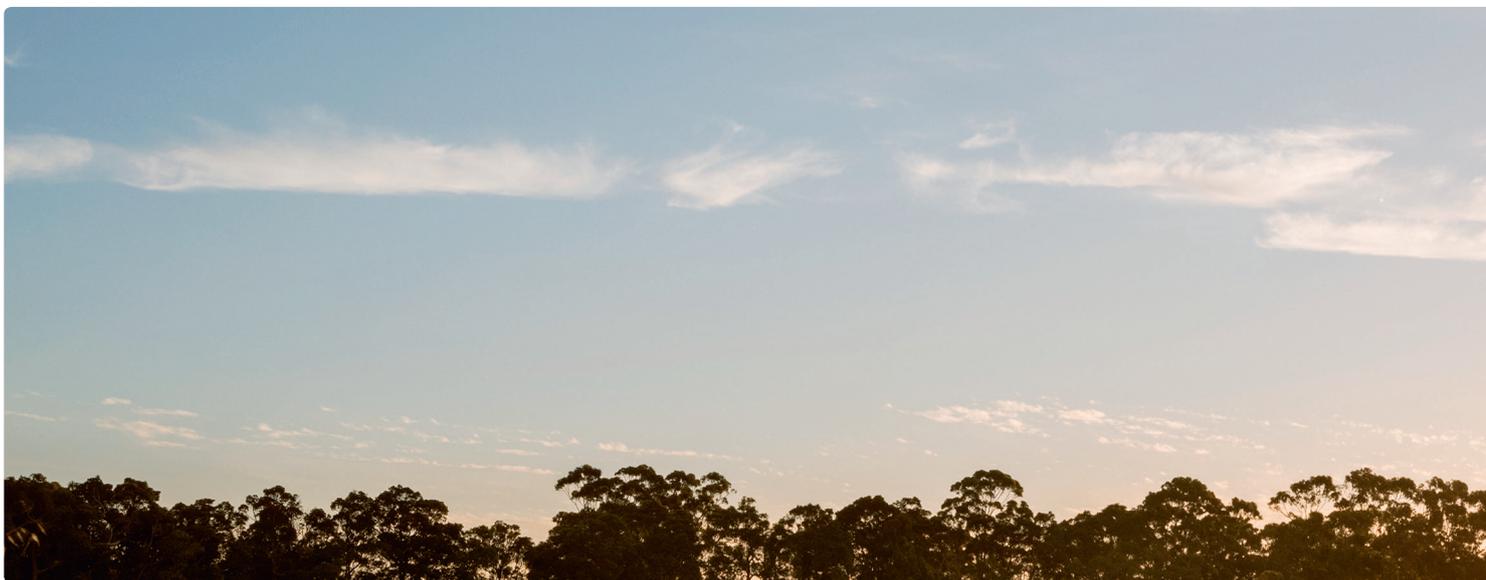
Further, there are inexplicable differences between states which can have devastating effects on the road toll. In RAC's 2017 study comparing WA's road safety record to Victoria's, the Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre found that WA's program of random breath testing commenced in October 1988, approximately 12 years after the introduction of the program in Victoria as did the introduction of Alcohol

Interlocks, with WA's program being introduced in 2016 and Victoria's in 2003. Further, WA's mobile camera operations are reflective of Victoria's camera operations during the early 1990's. In WA, Point to Point camera operations did not officially begin until 2017, seven years after it was formally proposed in 2010, and in the first six months of operation, it was done so in a non-enforcing trial.

Government across all levels have a responsibility to Australians to ensure that all can be done to reduce deaths and serious injuries. A bolder, bipartisan approach must be taken to ensure that inaction and slow adoption of evidence-based solutions is not being delayed unduly because of government processes.

**RAC calls on the Inquiry Advisory Panel to recommend:**

- › Stronger bipartisan leadership committed to saving lives and reducing serious injuries;
- › A bolder approach at departmental level to adopting road safety solutions, in a timely and proactive manner;
- › A more agile approach to testing and trialling programs and initiatives, particularly if they have been tested and successfully implemented elsewhere; and
- › A resolute commitment to roll out programs and initiatives at the scale necessary to make a tangible impact.



## Outcome monitoring

There are a number of mechanisms to allocate funding to initiatives which are aimed at reducing the number of KSI on our roads. However, without good governance, shared KPIs, and a bold approach to the uptake of evidence-based initiatives, public funds may be spent ineffectively and sporadically. RAC believes that action plans and priority programs must be supported by adequate funding as well as being complemented by benchmarks and ongoing monitoring of the funded program.

In a series of papers commissioned by RAC which examine the payment of taxation by motorists and spending on roads by State and Federal governments, we found that in 2018, on top of fees and charges on motorists by the State Government, the Australian Government collected approximately \$2.7 billion from motor vehicle related taxes in 2016/17 but returned just 30 cents in every dollar (\$806 million) to the State for spending on WA roads. From 2005/06 to 2016/17, the total return to WA motorists from the taxes levied by the Australian Government has averaged 28 cents per dollar collected per annum.

There are a number of road safety programs in WA, however, not all programs are evaluated and monitored for their performance to ensure the optimal performance or the continuation of the initiative. The following programs are a selected list of unevaluated programs:

- › Whole of program evaluation for roadside breath testing for alcohol including a measure of the intensity of the test type;
- › Alcohol Interlock programs;
- › The impact of the performance of roadside oral fluid testing for illicit drugs;
- › The impact of the performance of the camera type on the frequency of all crashes and by crash severity;
- › The measure of the deployment of seed cameras by type;
- › Whole of program evaluation of Graduated Driver Training and Licensing Programs;

- › Effectiveness of Road Safety Community Grants; and
- › Effectiveness of mass media campaigns.

Due to the limited nature of public funds, it is of the upmost importance that government spending on road safety programs and projects are allocated strategically and carefully to ensure the greatest savings in deaths and serious injuries which are in turn, supported by ongoing evaluation of the program.

### **RAC calls on the Inquiry Advisory Panel to recommend:**

- › Allocation of road safety funding to support the uptake of evidence-based initiatives;
- › Allocation of road safety funding in initiatives which can result in the greatest gains to improve KSI; and
- › Improve the accountability and measurability of road safety spending.

## Conclusion

The RAC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry's deliberations. It is a cause of great frustration to those impacted by road trauma that reducing KSI rates has been so difficult to achieve. It is critical to adopt a cohesive approach across all levels of government and to work together to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured. The NRSS provides the states and territories with an ongoing action plan, but to carry out and deliver these plans, and to make a genuine difference, this Inquiry must instigate good governance, a bold and proactive approach as well as sufficient and prioritised funding.



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