

# **ROAD SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN AUSTRALIA**

## **A call for more coordinated action**

**Lauchlan McIntosh AM**

*(January 2013)*

## Contents

- 1.0 **SUMMARY**
- 2.0 **ISSUES AND ACTORS**
  - 2.1 **National**
  - 2.2 **International**
- 3.0 **RECENT ACTIONS**
- 4.0 **ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**
  - 4.1 **Research**
  - 4.2 **Technology**
  - 4.3 **Communication**
  - 4.4 **Leadership**
  - 4.5 **New Programs**
  - 4.6 **Economics**
- 5.0 **WHAT DO WE DO FOR OTHER SIMILAR PROBLEMS?**
  - 5.1 **Alcohol Misuse**
  - 5.2 **Superannuation Information for Consumers**
  - 5.3 **Building cooperative and productive workplaces**
  - 5.4 **The Green Car Fund**
- 6.0 **SO WHERE TO FOR ROAD SAFETY?**

## 1.0 SUMMARY

This is a conversation paper on national public policy issues relating to reducing Australia's deaths and injuries from road crashes. These deaths and injuries are often termed the "road toll"; a toll or price we do not have to pay. The National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (NRSS) accepts a zero vision...no one should be killed in road crashes. This conversation paper is entirely the view of the author, developed from conversation with a wide range of interested individuals and it will be updated based on comments received. This is the second edition. It is intended to provide an independent constructive commentary with some specific actions to reduce road trauma in Australia.

Two years into the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, the Australian response and actions in managing a reduction in domestic road trauma could benefit from a more coordinated and action-oriented focus.

Australian governments collectively agreed in May 2011 to reduce deaths and injuries from road crashes by 30% by 2020. While results in some areas are on target, overall Australia is already falling behind its trauma reduction targets. More died and perhaps more were injured in road crashes in 2012 than 2011. Twenty five died every week in 2012 across the country in those crashes. We can estimate that around 500 were seriously injured; every week.

Recognising road safety should be a vital factor in the Australian productivity and national economic debate. There is a strong case for integrating road safety targets and aspirations into all current research, road, vehicle and communication programs. For assessing and building efficient cooperative State, Local and Federal Government road safety programs together with business, professional and community groups. There is strong case for having not only a national reduction target for deaths and injuries but also a widely agreed action plan and budget to focus attention and enhance resource coordination.

Funding at sufficient scale could come from new sources and from current road, industry, transport, insurance and health-related areas. That budget though should recognise the size of the problem (i.e. the annual cost to the community of at least \$27 billion+) and the scale of the response needed to achieve effective results. The funding is not simply expenditure; it will be investment with a real return.

It is essential to build a consensus across the whole community that there are many solutions, often at relatively low capital and social cost, which can reduce trauma without unnecessarily impacting on mobility.

Specifically national actions should be;

- A decision by COAG to ask the Federal Government to commission a study by the Productivity Commission on the full impacts road trauma on national productivity, the current size of annual expenditure by all government sectors including transport, legal, industry and health, as well as to assess the economic costs and benefits of State, Federal and Local Government -based road safety programs.
- Development of a national road safety research plan and national research budget involving government and industry, which should include a national data base of incidents with research which has a focus on timely and practical results. We need the best facts and

evidence, not opinions, to make a difference. We need that research to improve our ability and our capacity to get results. Integration with best practice international researchers should be included.

- Development of a national active plan and budget to facilitate the introduction of safety technologies across vehicles and infrastructure.
- Development of a national road safety communications (and marketing) plan.
- Collective agreement from road safety groups themselves (government at all levels, business, researchers, practitioners) to the action plan which can build national and international partnerships, reduce duplication and which leaders can join and promote.
- Using and extending existing non regulatory, effective programs such as AusRAP, ANCAP, and KEYS2DRIVE, rather than starting duplicate programs.
- Assessing and reporting road trauma as a vital factor in the Australian national economy and national budget, set to ensure that reduction targets are met with safety targets included in all road infrastructure, vehicle and technology related spending as well as in mobility planning.

Road trauma should be assessed as a vital factor in the Australian national economy and a national budget which recognises the real scale of the problem set to ensure that reduction targets are met. Safety targets should be included in all road infrastructure, vehicle and technology-related spending as well as in mobility planning. The scale of potential national savings of at least \$10bn pa in 10 years or \$55bn over the 10years will requires a priority national COAG plan and perhaps a budget of at least \$500m pa. An initial step to resource a Productivity Commission review and to fund a national coordination program of key parties is urgently needed. The benefits will be in lives saved and reduced trauma, savings to the health and legal systems and improved national productivity.

## **2.0 ISSUES AND ACTORS**

### **2.1 National**

The cost of road trauma in Australia has been estimated at \$27bn pa, about 10% more than the annual Australian Defence Budget. At least 30,000 crash victims present at hospitals annually. Many are incapacitated for life. The ongoing costs are unknown.

Australian governments collectively, with general support from relevant non-government groups, have agreed to reduce road trauma by at least 30% by 2021. The benefits for individuals, their relatives and the community will be immense; the economic saving by that time in today's dollars will be \$10bn pa, perhaps \$55bn over the first 10 years, resulting in, though not clearly identified, national productivity gains. The reduction target of 30% applies to death and serious injuries but by world standards is weak; we seem destined to fall further behind the top performers within Europe with their collective 50% target across all EU countries. Australia's comparative performance has fallen from being in the top 10 to the bottom of the top 20.

The management of 'road safety', a broad term to describe activities which impact on the many factors around safe road use in Australia, is fragmented. State and Territory Governments in general have responsibility and manage programs for road safety; the Federal Government for new vehicle

safety, State and Territory police for enforcement of State and Territory laws and regulations and local government for implementation of local infrastructure and programs. Other user groups, national transport agencies, concerned citizen organisations, some insurers, and professional groups also contribute to a range of trauma reduction activities.

Solutions and costs are often simply limited to the transport sector (vehicles roads), and education and enforcement arenas while the benefits seen in another (health, insurance, industry).

Sections of the corporate sector are increasing their investment and resources to manage road safety risk. Organisations and individuals are changing mode use and travel choices, specifying safer cars and safer roads to eliminate or manage the use of the road infrastructure.

While there is a National Road Safety Strategy for the current decade, there is no single overarching national government, business, professional, research implementation program, action plan or budget to achieve that annual saving of \$10bn. (Such an annual saving would support considerable ongoing investment with a real return. A simple cost benefit analysis would show a collective national investment of say \$500mpa, \$5bn over 10 years, would result in a saving of around \$50bn, or a 10:1 benefit.)

Whether such an implementation and investment program is necessary has never been debated, and the current fragmented approach appears to be accepted by default.

Considerable political discussion recently in Australia has focused on the problems and successes of our federation and the value of the collaborative Council of Australian Governments (COAG) mechanism. Despite the the high cost of road trauma, the savings which can be achieved by real investment, road safety does not appear high on the COAG agenda. A 2009 National Partnership Agreement established a National Road Safety Council in 2009, but November 2012 saw the Council disbanded. No complete national data base exists on road trauma outcomes, the loss of productivity, the costs of duplications, the benefits of competitive State-based management and research, or any independent analysis of the various trauma reduction programs locally or internationally.

Australia does not have a large, autonomous organisation, which independently comments or compares road safety performance such as the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in the USA, or the European Transport Safety Council. Several consumer, research and professional bodies do make effective contributions. These have and can act effectively in concert, but are resource limited for the size of the task.

Some of the major organisations involved currently include;

- The National Road Safety Executive Group under the National Partnership Agreement of Federal, State and Territory Governments from a COAG process.
- State and local government road, transport and policing agencies with specific responsibilities relating to road construction, operation and enforcement.
- The Federal government with responsibility for new vehicle safety with the Australian Design Rules

- The National Road Safety Council (now disbanded),
- The National Transport Commission (with the inception of a new proposal for a business and road safety partnership, although Safe Work Australia's role here is unclear.)
- The National Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator
- Austroads, an organisation with members of the six Australian state and two territory road transport and traffic authorities, the Department of Infrastructure and Transport, the Australian Local Government Association and the New Zealand Transport Agency who provide information and advice and fostering research in the Australasian road and road transport sector including safety.
- ARRB, providing research, consulting and information services to the road and transport industry.
- University based research and teaching centres; (CARSQ, TARS UNSW, MUARC, CASR, Curtin-MARC, The George Institute, NeuRA and others)
- User groups, such as Australian Trucking Association (Truck Safe); the Australian Automobile Association with the NRMA, RACV, RACQ, RACSA, RACWA, RACT and AANT (Keys2Drive, AusRAP; UCRS); Kidsafe; the Pedestrian Council; the Motorcycle Council and the Cycling Council, the Australian Road Safety Foundation, the 33900 Non Government Road Safety Network, the Royal Australian College of Surgeons Trauma Committee and many others.
- ANCAP, the Australasian New Car Assessment Program
- ACRS, the Australasian College of Road Safety

***No national program coordinates or attempts to encourage collaboration and measure the effectiveness of that collaboration of the many involved in reducing road trauma. There is no data on the amounts currently spent or planned to be spent aggregated nationally. There is no recognition of the importance of the need for a professional management approach to that collaboration. There is no evidence of actions to encourage national or international benchmarking, cost efficiency or improving the productivity of the current players and their programs.***

## **2.2 International**

Australia is an active supporter of the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety program which aims to halt the rise in road trauma in this decade, and is currently the largest single government donor to the World Bank's Global Road Safety Facility. AusAID is increasingly including road safety factors in its aid programs. The WHO Global Road Safety Partnership has built programs with the help of Australian organisations, research institutions and consultants. iRAP, the international road assessment program with links to the AusRAP program has also been successful. In May 2012 in Malaysia, many Australian road safety experts through ANCAP contributed to the first ASEAN Automotive Safety Week.

While not the subject to this overview, the benefits of linking Australian road safety projects, researchers and practitioners to international programs, as is well recognised in other areas, are valuable to not only the developing countries but to assist in adding skills, experience and knowledge.

### ***International cooperation is valuable***

## **3.0 RECENT ACTIONS**

Last year a range of generally unconnected road safety related events and actions occurred with links to national road safety public policy. Some, though certainly not all, were;

- May: In Canberra, ARRB and the ACRS jointly held a seminar to review and track progress against the National Road Safety Strategy after its first year of implementation. The Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Catherine King MP, made an address. Seven specific actions were recommended, only a few have been implemented. A similar event in Canberra with a focus on pedestrian safety is to be considered for May 2013.
- June: Both the Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport, and the relevant Opposition Spokesman Mr Darren Chester made addresses specifically relating to road safety initiatives to the national Parliament. These were important addresses to the nation.
- June: The SA Government released a comprehensive report from its Thinker in Residence, world road safety specialist; Professor Wegman titled "Driving Down the Road Toll, by building a safe system." This report has many recommendations which apply across Australia.
- June: Bosch Australia, a major supplier of safety-assist technologies offered specific support for the NRSS with recommendations for action to encourage early adoption. Bosch hosted a demonstration event for these technologies in Melbourne.
- July: The Road Safety Remuneration Act established the Road Safety Remuneration System, which commenced on 1 July 2012. This relates entirely to heavy road vehicles.
- June: The National Infrastructure Council reports to COAG that 'road safety is an ongoing concern for the community' and notes some progress for national regulation of road safety, suggests it will facilitate future events on road safety and productivity, how researchers are focussing on digital technologies to reduce congestion and improve road safety and some generic statements on road safety benefits in a range of specific projects.
- July: Michael Deegan, National Infrastructure Coordinator, suggested in a speech to the RAC WA that disbanding the nine separate transport bureaucracies and setting up an independent national body of experts to give Ministers advice to get the "best bang for the buck".
- August: The ACRS held a conference with 250 delegates in Sydney "A Safe System, expanding the reach" with an introduction from the Governor General and also the Parliamentary Secretary. No specific program for future action was recommended. A similar conference with a focus on road safety and the media is scheduled for Adelaide November 2013.

- September: A National Road Safety Forum was held in Canberra as an initiative of the Australian Government, convened by the Parliamentary Secretary. The purpose of the forum was to bring together key stakeholders to discuss several important issues identified in the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020. Several recommendations were made although specific reporting progress is unclear. A similar forum is scheduled to be held in Tasmania in 2013.
- October: 330 delegates (many Australians) attended the Australasian Research, Policing and Education Conference held in Wellington NZ following the World Safety Conference. No specific program for future action was recommended. A similar event is scheduled for Brisbane in August 2013.
- November: The National Road Safety Council, established by a National Partnership Agreement with the Prime Minister, state Premiers and territory Chief Ministers in 2009 to facilitate the implementation of nationally agreed road safety reforms, is disbanded. A paper by the Chair and Executive Director published in December 2012 suggests an ongoing work program was envisaged. A review of road safety management by the COAG Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure is proposed.
- October-December: The ACRS and the National Health and Medical Research Council continued discussions on the development of a National Road Safety Research Strategy within the NRSS. A workshop is scheduled for February 2013. Road trauma reduction actions are a preventative health measure, reducing loads not only on trauma management but long term care activities.
- November: The Royal Australian College of Surgeons convened a Road Safety Forum
- November: MUARC ran a Road Safety Management and Leadership program.
- November: A detailed progress report by SCOTI listed 59 actions to be taken during the first three years (2011-2013) of the NRSS with progress against each item. No economic analysis of any item or of the program was included.
- November: The COAG Standing Committee on Transport and Infrastructure (SCOTI) met and reported; "... the latest progress report on the National Road Safety Strategy, showing that considerable activity is underway across all areas of the strategy....that road crash deaths in 2011 had reduced by 10 per cent relative to the strategy baseline period (2008–2010), with similar reductions for most of the strategy's key performance indicators. (This was despite an increase in the road toll figures for 2012, which instead of a reduction of 3%, nationally saw an increase of 1.9%, around 70 deaths and perhaps 1400 unnecessary serious injuries)
- December: The COAG communiqué is silent on road safety reform.

Some of these events were regular scheduled conferences, some were specifically arranged as a response to the Decade of Action, and some were the initiative of parliamentary leaders. Many were valuable, but in many cases events were obviously unconnected and did not necessarily attempt to build on lessons promoted from earlier activities or events.

***The UN Decade of Action has increased Road Safety event activity but limited coordinated action.***



#### **4.0 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Wegman's report to the South Australian Government recommends a list of actions for South Australia. While he encourages a more aggressive target for South Australia to achieve a similar road safety performance in line with Victoria, most of the actions proposed are local and he suggests should be coordinated by a new hierarchy of leadership and specialist committees, education and research programs.

The public events and activities listed above for Australia were basically independent. Actions recommended at the various forums, while perhaps linked to the overall NRSS, are often not part of the current SCOTI 59 point action plan. The NRSS, launched in 2011, has an action plan but no budget or agreed investment expenditure. It could be argued that the many Federal, State, professional and other bodies mentioned above individually have no option but to protect their own role to achieve the best resources for their own programs, rather than recognise and quantify the benefits of collaboration; i.e. efficiency, scale and hence less road trauma. The value or otherwise of Deegan's suggestion noted above for a national body of experts appears not to have been publically tested.

It is instructive to consider the recommendations of Wegman report for South Australia to inform a national work program. The report is current and reflects world best practice for improving road safety results. It is also useful in demonstrating where existing programs are overlooked, perhaps misunderstood or already poorly resourced. It would seem pointless limiting Wegman's recommendations to one state only.

In no specific order of importance, key areas for consideration are;

#### **4.1 Research**

Wegman recommends that the various professionals engaged in research should create conditions for successful implementation of solutions using a broad base of partnership. It suggests that their culture should be more 'results focused' and they should be more accountable for their performance. Road safety research, like any research will benefit from partnerships and scale. The recent example of the mining company Rio Tinto's approach to automated truck haulage for their iron ore operations is an excellent example of scale. Not content with their own research, or even the collegiate research available through the Australian Mineral Industry Research Association, Rio Tinto recognised they had to link up with five of the world's top mining centres (three Australian) and spent \$125m over 5 years. Rio Tinto's annual iron ore revenue is in the order of \$16bn; somewhat less than the estimated cost of Australian road trauma at \$27bn.

Brian Schmidt, Australia's recent Nobel Prize winner has commented on the value of scale and international research partnerships in driving quality research. This should apply to road safety. Currently in Australia research funding is very competitive; perhaps rightly so. The CRC process does encourage some collaboration, but there has been no national attempt to assess whether competition in road safety research encourages innovation and efficiency or perhaps even discourages the scale necessary for innovation.

We have some good sources for road safety research such as the TAC Victoria, the ACT-NRMA Road Safety Trust, Austroads, the NHMRC, the ARC, IAG, the Automobile Association and other consumer groups and some business.

Vehicle manufactures, communication companies, road accessory equipment firms and others are investing heavily in new safety technologies but remain generally disconnected from each other, the funders mentioned above, and governments. It is already recognised in the NRSS and from the May seminar that road safety research and incident data needs considerable improvement. Australia has no scaled plan or budget for these. A workshop coordinated by the ACRS and the NHMRC in February 2013 will attempt to establish a suitable mechanism.

***Australia needs a national road safety research plan and national research budget involving government and industry, which should include national data bases of incidents and research, which has a focus on timely and practical results. We need the best facts and evidence, not opinions, to make a difference.***

## **4.2 Technology**

Wegman recommends creating a Safe System in which human errors are considerably reduced, if not eliminated. Car, truck and motorcycle manufacturers have already developed many new collision reduction or avoidance technologies, and the mobile phone manufactures are rapidly developing new apps which will also assist. These are being introduced into the Australian market at the whim of the manufactures and in some cases at a rate behind markets in other countries.

ITS Australia in a recent submission to the Victorian Road Safety Strategy says; “Unfortunately the discussion paper (on the Draft Strategy) ...does little to flag the significant potential for emerging technology as a lever to improve road safety. Over the next 10 years there will be a transformation in road transport, with a suite of new vehicle and transport technologies delivering a step change in safety.”

The National Transport Council with a “Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems Regulatory Policy Issues Discussion Paper” is currently canvassing regulation issues with assistance from ITS Australia; and a CRC for Safe and Sustainable Transport is currently under consideration by the Federal Government.

BHP Billiton has set a high bar as a major consumer of vehicles and roads; setting ANCAP safety standards which recognise many new safety-assist technologies for its own operations and for contractors. Importantly these are world-wide standards.

Apart from the ANCAP future road map which will reward early introduction of some of these technologies into new cars, and the possible ITS CRC, we have no national program which would see Australia as a leader in the introduction of these lifesaving and injury reducing technologies. No obvious national program seeks to integrate vehicle, road and communications technologies.

**Australia needs an active plan and budget to facilitate the introduction of safety technologies.**

### 4.3 Communication

Wegman encourages investing in further cooperation of stakeholders to orchestrate communication carefully, keeping every stakeholder aligned with their own responsibility, but having a general goal in mind: reducing the road toll. (Unfortunately some of the key professional groups such as the Australasian Institute of Traffic Planning and Management (AITPM), the Australasian College of Road Safety (ACRS) and others were overlooked by Wegman. In some ways this demonstrates the need for a broad based consortia factual approach. The need to include a wider range of interests, town planners, and health and community specialists to truly embrace a safe travel system is necessary.) As ANCAP has learnt, communication of a simple message on safer car, within a safe system model, is as important as the testing and assessment.

Wegman goes on to suggest the 'media' as stakeholders, to encourage a better road safety culture for drivers. In a safe system all players; transport geographers and urban designers, regulators, road builders, car manufacturers, pedestrians; not just drivers need to have a better road safety culture. Reducing unnecessary road use itself can be beneficial to reducing the crash rate and hence related trauma. Blaming the drivers only, is unlikely to be productive in the longer term.

At present very few people understand the real implications of safe systems principles, and so the debate often continues to be hijacked by a focus on those drivers who break rules, and calls for personal responsibility, instead of an understanding of the many factors which contribute to crashes and admitting that many of these can be improved.

The lack of co-ordination of messages can be confusing for the community and may discourage any enthusiasm for system reform.

Convincing the people first of the benefits of what can be done with a coordinated, comprehensive campaign with all the current advocates for change working in unison, may well lead to encourage a new level of leadership from government, business and community groups to a safer road safety system..

Some sharing of government media programs occurs; but consumers increasingly have access through social media and the internet to national and international information. Some community and social programs touch on issues but generally within specific silos. Road safety professionals themselves have limited guidance on issues outside their own speciality. Marketing what can be done is as essential as knowing what can be done. Wegman's emphasis on a common goal extended across the all the various players is vital.

***Australia needs a national road safety communications (and marketing) plan.***

### 4.4 Leadership

Wegman recommends that real leadership is needed for this challenging task and recommends that for South Australia leaders such as the Premier, the Minister for Road Safety, the Cabinet and CEOs are all needed to achieve a successful result. Many others have made similar suggestions for leadership over many years. Perhaps it is time to ask ***"Why leave it to politicians?"***

There are already many groups as listed above active in trying to reduce road trauma. Why are they not effective? We have modal interest groups, capacity building organisations, non-government

networks, a business partnership program at the National Transport Council, a National Infrastructure Council; many of whom were overlooked by Wegman and the National Strategy.

In the last decade no Premier, Prime Minister or Cabinet has taken a long term leadership road safety role. The current Governor-General and her predecessor have spoken out expressing concern, the addresses to the Parliament in 2012 by the Parliamentary Secretary and the Shadow Secretary were a positive initiative and individual State Ministers have also expressed concern; but the concept of major reform or leadership as a priority COAG topic appears elusive.

There are many other issues which take the leaders' interest. They, and the community have seen the real reductions in road trauma over the last 40 years (with up to 100,000 lives saved) and perhaps are not convinced that a similar result or better over the next 40 years is possible.

The existing road safety interest groups need to collectively agree and define simply and coherently what is possible. To date they have failed to do so. Wegman suggests a Safe Systems Task Force to operate for one year and a Technology Forum to nurture cooperation. While that may be an improvement on the current arrangements, why not encourage national partnerships of the existing groups (and longer term into international partnerships)? Why not make the existing parties responsible, why not encourage them to look for more wider partnerships and scale; who else will have the time to learn what is already known? Corporations are already taking actions; they can encourage other colleagues in similar industries or the service sector such as insurers.

Political leadership may well follow when the current passionate and informed road safety groups demonstrate the potential of simple actions to make a difference.

***Road safety groups themselves (government at all levels, business, researchers, and practitioners) need to collectively agree to an action program which builds national and international partnerships which leaders can join and promote.***

#### **4.5 New Programs**

Wegman suggests a Functional Road Classification and Hierarchy for South Australia which endorses a framework for establishing credible speed limits and which integrates road safety into other areas such as planning and design, health and education and identify opportunities that exist with safe vehicles and safe technologies. While there are potential benefits in terms of short term gains from a State based approach, any such program should be national, just as vehicle safety assessment, education and enforcement. These programs should not be constrained by state borders.

Australia should build on existing, successful non regulatory programs such as AusRAP, ANCAP, and KEYS2DRIVE rather than start duplicate programs.

#### **4.6 Economics**

Wegman references a hierarchical road safety model in assessing the many factor impacts of road trauma. To fill in that model, to make it active and relevant we need an independent economy-wide assessment of road trauma as set out earlier in this paper. The current national government has not been convinced to undertake such an assessment using the Productivity Commission, perhaps

confirming the failure noted above of the current groups' ability to convince their political leaders to step outside the transport sector and look across other sectors such as health, workplace safety, insurance, workplace and national productivity, for example.

We know the annual costs are at least \$27bn pa and that an annual saving of \$10bn is possible yet we have no comprehensive assessment of where those benefits will accrue to the Australian economy, no priority work program based on those benefits, and certainly no comprehensive national budget to achieve them. We need a new cohort of economic data first. We cannot expect 'political or other leaders' who already have life experience as users of the current road system, with the focus on the 'blame the driver model' and limited understanding of what the costs really are, to understand why an economy-wide assessment is necessary. (Equally they are unlikely to readily accept what is actually achievable. Infrastructure Australia Deegan's suggestion of an analysis of various scenarios to effectively reduce duplication and get a more efficient use of current resources has not as noted above, been actively publically canvassed. Improving data collection, identifying opportunities for greater collaboration between jurisdictions and with non-government road safety entities was a recommendation from the May 2012 ARRB/ACRS Forum.

Road funding, industry support programs for vehicles, and communication technology support programs are major components of both Federal and State Budgets. Why are there programs which have no guaranteed road safety outcomes? Why are there not standard safety and modal use assessments for projects just as we have environmental assessments? New funds may not be required, but all current funds should all be subject to a roads safety benefit analysis. International work has suggested up to 10% of road funding for example, could be set aside for specific road safety programs. Maybe we already do that, but we certainly do not report it, or even aspire to it.

***Reducing road trauma should be assessed as a vital factor in the Australian national economy and a national budget set to ensure that reduction targets are met with safety targets included in all road infrastructure, vehicle and technology-related government spending.***

## **5.0 WHAT DO WE DO FOR OTHER SIMILAR PROBLEMS?**

It is difficult to make specific comparisons, but here are areas where a coordinated, national approach is being made to address issues where there is community concern.

### **5.1 Alcohol Misuse**

The estimated cost of alcohol abuse by drinkers in Australia is \$15.3 billion, as identified in a report published in 2008 by D.J. Collins and H.M. Lapsley. A landmark report in 2010 unearthed a new dimension in the national alcohol debate, for the first time identifying the cost of alcohol-related harms to those other than the drinker themselves. The newly identified \$20 billion annual cost of alcohol's harm to others enabled the report's authors to estimate a new total annual cost of alcohol misuse in Australia. Through careful and comprehensive analysis of the report's findings and the extent to which they overlapped or added to the existing costs identified by Collins and Lapsley in 2008, the total cost of alcohol misuse in Australia was conservatively estimated as being \$36 billion every year.

In 2001 the Australian Parliament established in 2001 the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education with a \$115 million grant.

## **5.2 Superannuation Information for Consumers**

The Federal Government has recently announced it will provide \$10 million over three years as a contribution to an investment fund, the earnings of which will be used to fund the on-going costs of a non-profit organisation with a primary focus on superannuation policy research and advocacy. The Government's contribution will be contingent on matching funding being provided by industry.

Industry support for the centre provides an opportunity for the superannuation industry to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring that the interests of superannuation consumers are well represented in the development of reforms and will help to ensure that the centre is well resourced to perform this important role.

The Government has announced it will invite expressions of interest from the private sector.

## **5.3 Building cooperative and productive workplaces**

A \$3 billion Building Australia's Future Workforce package of funding was part of the May 2011 Budget. The Trade Union Education Fund received a grant of \$11m in 2012 to establish a long term program of education and skills development to support cooperative and productive workplace relations that promotes national economic prosperity and social inclusion for all Australians. This was part of a \$22m package of funding paid to The Union Education Foundation (\$11m) and two employer organisations, Australian Industry Group (\$5.5m) and Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (\$5.5m).

## **5.4 The Green Car Fund**

The Rudd government set up a Green Car Fund as part of its \$6.2 billion car plan, which was unveiled at the depths of the financial crisis in late 2008, when the local car industry was on its knees. Up to \$500m of Federal funding was offered for co-investment programs with car manufactures. While some of that funding was axed to fund flood relief, it demonstrates the potential size of funds available if the community is seen to demand it.

## **6.0 SO WHERE TO FOR ROAD SAFETY?**

A well-funded national long term action plan is needed to reduce road trauma with a safe systems factual approach, based on quality practical research, with a coordinated communications program, using existing road safety groups and programs, including an active plan and budget to facilitate the introduction of safety technologies across vehicles and infrastructure.

Critical cost effective assessment, international benchmarking, and a concerted effort to reduce duplication across the country will result in less deaths and less injuries.

There needs to be a recognition that road safety groups themselves (government at all levels, business, researchers, practitioners) can collectively agree to an action program which builds national and international partnerships which leaders can join and promote.

International studies, well researched recommendations (such as the Wegman report) all point to the value of national political leadership in road safety public policy. The transport system is a public good and on that basis alone, it can be argued that governments, including the Federal Government should make safety of the transport system a priority. Transport system productivity is hindered and impeded due to unnecessary trauma levels - that must be a national concern. While the key role may be for governments, other groups such as the ACRS, 33900, AAA, ATA, Police, Research Institutes, other user and interest bodies and individuals working together will make a difference. New groups such as insurers should be encouraged to join in.

Collectively they could provide the independent contribution such as the European Transport Council and or the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety.

Road trauma should be assessed as a vital factor in the Australian national economy and a national budget which recognises the real scale of the problem set to ensure that reduction targets are met. Safety targets should be included in all road infrastructure, vehicle and technology-related spending as well as in mobility planning. The scale of potential national savings of at least \$10bn pa in 10 years or \$55bn over the 10years will requires a priority national COAG plan and perhaps a budget of at least \$500m pa. An initial step to resource a Productivity Commission review and to fund a national coordination program of key parties is urgently needed. The benefits will be in lives saved and reduced trauma, savings to the health and legal systems and improved national productivity.

*(The analysis and comment here is not intended to cover all activities and all those involved but are the key factors recognised by the author. While others have contributed, the views are his alone and not necessarily those of the road safety organisations with which he is associated.)*

END