

ACRS Submission



2022-23 Pre-budget Submission

About the Australasian College of Road Safety

The Australasian College of Road Safety was established in 1988 and is the region's peak organisation for road safety professionals and members of the public who are focused on saving lives and serious injuries on our roads.

The College Patron is His Excellency General the Honourable David John Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
WHO Global Plan for Decade of Action on Road Safety.....	3
National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS)	3
ACRS principles	4
ACRS Recommendations	4
1. National road safety funding	5
a) Road Safety Funding within the Federal Budget	5
b) Costing to Achieve Road Safety Targets	5
2. Capacity building.....	6
c) Road Safety Professionals Accreditation	6
d) Local Government Capacity Building	6
e) Australasian Road Safety Conference (ARSC).....	7
f) International Outreach Project Expansion	7
g) Road Safety Policy Advice	8
Conclusion and Recommendations	10
References.....	11

Introduction

The Australasian College of Road Safety is the region's peak membership association for road safety with a vision of eliminating death and serious injury on the road. Our members include experts from all areas of road safety including policy makers, health and transport professionals, academics, community organisations, researchers, federal, state and local government agencies, private companies and members of the public. The purpose of the College is to support our members in their efforts to eliminate serious road trauma through knowledge sharing, professional development, networking and advocacy. Our objectives include the promotion of road safety as a critical organisational objective within government, business and the community; the promotion and advocacy of policies and practices that support harm elimination; the improvement of relative safety outcomes for vulnerable demographic and user groups within the community; the promotion of post-crash policies and practices; and the promotion of a collegiate climate amongst all those with responsibilities for and working in road safety.

The ACRS is pleased to make this pre-budget submission for the Commonwealth 2022-23 Budget. It comes at a critical time for road safety, with the opportunity to begin the new UN Decade of Action on Road Safety 2021-2030, and the new Australian National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, by demonstrating commitment to road safety as a national priority.

The ACRS welcomed the \$1 billion in the 2021-22 budget for the Road Safety Program, building on the \$2 billion in the previous year. However, it was disappointing to note that the funding was a short-term stimulus measure, rather than being embedded as a longer-term commitment to road safety. This fundamental issue about how road safety is seen must be addressed in the 2022-23 Budget.

We note that the Australian Government has committed \$25 billion to road safety over four years from 2020-21. ACRS welcomes this commitment and recommends that it is solidified in the 2022-23 budget through ensuring that this funding is allocated to programs and projects directly targeted to road safety (rather than just 'linked to') and broadened to include road safety programs and projects outside infrastructure.

WHO Global Plan for Decade of Action on Road Safety

The World Health Organization recently released their Global Plan for the United Nations Second Decade of Action on Road Safety 2021-2030. It's notable that a second decade has been declared, immediately following the first – because insufficient progress was made. That is as true in Australia as it is anywhere in the world. We did not meet our targets for reducing fatal and serious injuries during our 2011-2020 National Strategy and must make changes to turn this around. The Global Plan notes that road safety is under-funded in most countries, and needs to be embedded within transport decision-making, not considered an add-on.

National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS)

The recently released NRSS 2021-2030 targets reducing fatalities by 50% and serious injuries by 30% by 2030. Importantly, it also expects "a significant increase of total road transport infrastructure funding is directed to targeted road safety improvement". This provides an opportunity to refocus the way we think about road transport – from how fast we get there, to how safely we get there. This is vital if we are to address the impact of road trauma in Australia, with 3 people dying and more than 100 hospitalised every day from using our roads.

ACRS principles

ACRS believes that the causes of road trauma are predictable, and it is possible to eliminate fatal and serious injury on the road. Road traffic crashes may still occur, but no crash should be so severe that it results in fatal or serious injuries. Road trauma can be prevented through rational analysis of the causes and consequences (systemic risk) of crashes and evidence-based countermeasures.

The road traffic system must be made safe for all road users. The risk of road trauma is not equal across the community. Non-motorised users like pedestrians and cyclists, users with disabilities and lower socio-economic power, and First Nations users, bear a disproportionate share of the injury burden due to road crashes. Equal protection should be afforded to all. People of all ages, backgrounds and abilities should be able to access the road network without being exposed to hazards that carry the risk of fatal or serious injury, irrespective of whether they walk, roll on a wheelchair, cycle, use public transport or use private motor vehicles. The importance of considering all road users, not only cars and trucks, is highlighted in the finding that some of the most effective road safety interventions are the provision of integrated public transport, and pedestrian footpaths and crossings(1).

System designers should aim to prevent human error and mitigate its consequences. Those who regulate, design and manage the road traffic system (governments, road authorities, vehicle manufacturers, organisations which provide or procure transport services) are responsible for the level of safety of the entire system. In undertaking all these activities, the aim should be to minimise the potential for road-user error and to protect users from fatal or serious injury when errors do occur.

Life and health are not exchangeable for other benefits in society. The unacceptability of fatal and serious injuries means that safety and health are more important outcomes of the road traffic system than efficiency or cost. Other community benefits of safer roads should also be considered such as encouraging physical activity, reducing air and noise pollution, and lower levels of stress.

ACRS believes the allocation of funding in the 2022-23 Federal Budget should be made with these principles in mind. It is also economically responsible to do so. Preventable road trauma costs up to an estimated 3% of GDP in wealthy countries such as Australia(2). The National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 acknowledges this annual cost as \$30 billion in Australia(3). Investing in road safety will reduce this preventable and costly burden.

ACRS Recommendations

This submission presents recommendations for investments in road safety in the Australian Federal Budget 2022-23. The investments relate to national road safety funding and achieving the road safety targets, and to capacity building within the road safety sector through accreditation, professional development, policy advice and building capacity in road safety in our region.

Currently in Australia, 3 people die and over 100 are seriously injured in road crashes each and every day(3). And the numbers are getting worse, not better(3, 4). If we are going to address this national crisis, the investments recommended in this submission are essential.

1. National road safety funding

a) Road Safety Funding within the Federal Budget

The NRSS 2021-2030 includes the commitment to “a significant increase of total road transport infrastructure funding is directed to targeted road safety improvement”. This commitment is in line with recommendations from the report on the inquiry into the previous national strategy(5), and of the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety’s 2020 report. However, the starting point is opaque. It is currently unclear how much money the Australian Government spends on road safety. Within the Budget documents funding is outlined for specific road infrastructure programs, some of which are directly related to road safety, but others conflate construction, maintenance, and safety within the one program. While road safety interventions must include areas outside infrastructure, the lack of clarity on the routine current road safety infrastructure spend should be resolved. A clear line item for dedicated road safety interventions within the infrastructure budget would improve transparency and accountability for ensuring that improvements to road safety are being adequately funded.

Proposal: \$5 billion per year allocated to dedicated road safety activity (of all types, including non-infrastructure, capacity building etc) from the infrastructure budget.

Financial commitment required: Nil additional

b) Costing to Achieve Road Safety Targets

The NRSS 2021-2030 includes targets of reducing road fatalities by 50% and serious injuries by 30% by 2030. Importantly, the document recognises that the targets from the previous national strategy were not achieved. The independent review of that 2011-2020 strategy found that key reasons for the failure were a lack of implementation and accountability(5). Those mistakes must be avoided in the 2021-2030 strategy. Essential to facilitating implementation and accountability is an analysis of the investment required to achieve the targets – where, when, and how much funding is needed. This would ensure firstly a rigorous assessment of whether the \$5 billion per year is the right amount, and secondly, that those funds are received by the right areas at the right time to get and keep Australia on track to meet the road safety targets.

Proposal: Analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Office of the investment required to achieve the National Road Safety Targets.

Financial commitment required: Nil

2. Capacity building

In line with recommendations from the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety's 2020 report(6), the NRSS 2021-2030 acknowledges the need for professional development among road safety professionals: "requires efforts to build capacity and capability not just in government agencies but all system designers and operators, including engineers, planners, law makers, enforcement agencies, post-trauma crash care workers, and others". As the organisation which brings together these disparate sectors under the one road safety umbrella, ACRS is uniquely placed to assist in building capacity among road safety professionals. We propose multiple elements to this.

c) Road Safety Professionals Accreditation

There is currently no clear definition of a road safety professional, with people entering the field from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, and no nation-wide agreed standards on the skills and expertise required of them. This project would scope, develop, and implement an accreditation scheme for road safety professionals. Through an expert advisory committee, ACRS would identify agreed standards for accreditation, collate information on currently available training programs, identify gaps, and develop a national accreditation program for road safety professionals. Similar programs exist internationally such as the Transportation Professional Certification Board in the United States of America and Canada(7).

Proposal: Four-year commitment to capacity building of road safety professionals in Australia through the development of a road safety professionals accreditation program.

Financial commitment required: \$800,000 i.e., \$200,000 p.a. over 4 years

d) Local Government Capacity Building

The NRSS 2021-2030 places specific requirements on local governments in respect to road safety nationally, through for example, the development of network safety plans and infrastructure star ratings, whilst simultaneously recognising the need for capacity building and strengthening. The 537 local councils across Australia have responsibility for three quarters of the road network, where significant trauma occurs, but there is great variation in the needs as well as capabilities, skills and resources available to respond, especially between urban and remote councils(8, 9).

This project would provide support and advice to local councils through establishing a network of local government road safety professionals across Australia. This would enable knowledge and information sharing within and among jurisdictions and communities, assisting in the identification and sharing of best practice, and ensuring that road safety professionals in smaller councils are not working in isolation.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to supporting and building road safety capacity in local government.

Financial Commitment Required: \$500,000 i.e., \$125,000 per annum for four years.

e) Australasian Road Safety Conference (ARSC)

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications has since 2019 supported the ARSC through the purchase of a Gold Sponsorship package and scholarships for Low- and Middle- Income Country (LMIC) scholarships. The Gold Sponsorship has ensured that the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications has been highlighted as a major supporter of this international conference - in 2021 there were 640 delegates from 27 countries.

In 2021, the LMIC scholarship funds provided opportunities for 38 presenters from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Iran, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Uganda. Most importantly, scholarship awardees have been inspired to act since ARSC2021. The ARSC facilitates collaboration and information sharing between road safety stakeholders and decision-makers, so it is essential that the Department has exposure in this area.

We propose extending the current grant funding for four years, with additional funding allocated to the LMIC Scholarships and to procure the quality keynote speakers, to further increase the impact of the ARSC.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to the ARSC in the form of a Gold Sponsorship (\$50,000), LMIC Scholarships (\$60,000) College management of the ARSC LMIC Scholarship Program (\$30,000), and procurement of international keynote speakers (\$30,000).

Financial Commitment Required: \$680,000 i.e., \$170,000 per annum for four years.

f) International Outreach Project Expansion

Through Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications grant funding, the College has successfully established an International Outreach Chapter (IOC). The Chapter has 95 members from 28 countries including 22 Low- and Middle- Income Countries (LMIC), where 93% of global road deaths occur. It is co-Chaired by three members from Malaysia, Iran and Australia.

The IOC helps to build capacity in LMICs, providing members the opportunity to present their road safety work and assist each other in addressing the challenges faced in improving road safety in their respective countries. The reduction of road trauma is especially important for economic growth in LMICs where the demographic profile of the country is usually younger, and the victims of road trauma are often the main income earners. There has been a high level of support from ACRS membership within Australia and overseas.

ACRS would like to further expand the International Outreach Project work to:

- Establish an LMIC Professional Mentorship program to match Australian and LMIC professionals to support, provide advice and access to the Australian-based ACRS network of Road Safety Professionals.
- Host an annual LMIC Networking Field Tour where we bring approximately 20 LMIC Road Safety Professionals to Australia to meet with their Australian colleagues, have presentations from senior Road Safety Professionals and conduct tours of training and organisational sites.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to capacity building of road safety professionals in low- and middle-income countries in the form of an expansion of the LMIC Professional Mentorship Program (\$50,000) and an annual LMIC Networking Field Tour (\$150,000).

Financial Commitment Required: \$800,000 i.e., \$200,000 per annum for four years.

g) Road Safety Policy Advice

The NRSS 2021-2030 takes a social model approach to road safety. “Influence is a key factor in the social model approach. This means each individual and organisation using their tools and influence to create outcomes that results in broader road safety awareness and benefits” (10). One of the NRSS enabling actions is cultural change - “There are many community and industry organisations and groups already contributing to a safety culture in Australia...the social model approach to road safety recognises the importance of these contributions and seeks to expand upon current effort across a greater number of layers of influence across society”(3).

The diverse membership of ACRS, bringing together researchers, practitioners and industry, means we are uniquely placed to provide this type of contribution to Government, informing local government, media and the public and to stimulate informed debate, and building capacity in local government. Resource limitations currently constrain these activities. A commitment to investing in these contributions is recognised in the health sector in Australia, through the Health Peak Advisory Bodies Funding available through the Department of Health.

However, this same commitment is lacking in the road safety sector, with no equivalent funding apparently available through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

ACRS would like to strengthen this area of our work, in translation of research into practice and best practice advice, helping to advocate for better road safety measures and build understanding of road safety principles. This will require us to develop and disseminate a portfolio of Best Practice and Policy Position Statements, to inform advice to Federal/ State and Local Government decisions on road safety, and education and training to health practitioners on how to minimise the impacts of road trauma on the health system. The statements will be freely available from the ACRS website and join the extensive collection of open access articles from our international, peer-reviewed Journal of Road Safety as a repository and source of sector knowledge and expertise.

Areas that ACRS may address include: providing safe environments for children; improving interactions with vulnerable road users to encourage safe physical activity; effective discouragement of alcohol/drug-related injury; impact of health conditions on driving; use of technology for disabled drivers; safe use of child restraints; encouraging road safety in rural and remote areas; reducing the inequitable burden of transport injury on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and encouraging safer road user behaviour.

The Statements will be developed through consultation with our extensive and diverse membership spanning health, engineering, education and transport sectors, helping to address integration of trauma losses in budgets across the multiple affected sectors. ACRS will host Policy Meetings to encourage the prioritisation of issues and discuss contemporary evidence to inform these statements and advice to Government.

ACRS will then establish an electronic repository on the ACRS website. This will be a user-friendly catalogue freely available to members, researchers, policy makers and the general public.

Funding for this Project will provide ACRS with an opportunity to progress the College's objectives:

- to promote and advocate policies and practices that support a harm elimination agenda within society;
- to share road safety knowledge and promote further research and evaluation to deepen the road safety knowledge base;
- to promote and support professional development, institutional strengthening and networking in pursuit of our objectives;
- to promote a collegial and collaborative climate amongst all those with responsibilities for and working in road safety;
- to improve relative safety outcomes for vulnerable demographic and user groups within the community;
- to promote post-crash policies and practices which support our other objectives; and
- to promote road safety as a critical organisational objective within government, business and the community.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to road safety policy and advocacy development through establishing an extensive Best Practice and Policy Position Statement portfolio.

Financial Commitment Required: \$800,000 i.e. \$200,000 per annum for four years.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The national road trauma crisis in Australia sees 1,200 people die and more than 40,000 seriously injured every year. We know how to prevent this; we just need to make the right investments. ACRS recommends the Australian Federal Budget 2022-23 include the following measures and investments:

- \$5 billion per year allocated to dedicated road safety activity (of all types, including non-infrastructure, capacity building etc) from the infrastructure budget
- Analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Office of the investment required to achieve the National Road Safety Targets
- Four-year commitment to capacity building of road safety professionals in Australia through the development of a road safety professionals accreditation program
- Four-year commitment to capacity building in local government councils throughout Australia
- Four-year commitment to the ARSC in the form of a Gold Sponsorship, LMIC Scholarships, College management of the ARSC LMIC Scholarship Program, and procurement of international keynote speakers
- Four-year commitment to capacity building of road safety professionals in low- and middle-income countries in the form of an annual LMIC Networking Field Tour and an expansion of the LMIC Professional Mentorship Program
- Four-year commitment to road safety policy and advocacy development through establishing an extensive Best Practice and Policy Position Statement portfolio.

ACRS appreciates the opportunity to make this submission and contribute to reducing road trauma in Australia. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require additional information or have any queries in relation to this submission.



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