

ACRS POLICY PLATFORM

New Zealand General Election 2026

Every day on New Zealand roads:

1

person dies¹

7

people are seriously injured²

Worse, while we have been making some progress with saving lives, serious injuries are increasing, and in the past 12 months, the number of deaths has also increased.

● This is preventable

● We can do better

● We must

The Australasian College of Road Safety calls on the next New Zealand Government to:

1. Restore a clear national road safety goal through the Government Policy Statement
2. Establish parliamentary road safety leadership and accountability mechanism
3. Prioritise sustainable road safety investment to reduce harm and improve transport productivity.
4. Restore evidence-based speed management



Road safety keeps New Zealand moving

At Matariki, New Zealand pauses to remember those who have died, reflect on the year behind us, and look ahead with hope and purpose³. For too many families, whānau, and communities, that includes remembrance of people killed or seriously injured on our roads. Ministry of Transport provisional data shows that 172¹ people had died on New Zealand roads in the year to 30 June 2026. This is higher than the equivalent totals for 2023, 2024, and 2025, but lower than the equivalent total for 2022¹. These losses are not inevitable. They are the result of a transport system that can and must be made safer.

The New Zealand Chapter of the Australasian College of Road Safety (ACRS) calls on all political parties to make road safety a national priority. Safer roads save lives, but they also keep New Zealand moving by reducing disruption, improving network reliability, supporting freight and public transport, and helping people get to work, school, appointments, and home on time. Road safety should therefore be treated as a core transport productivity investment, not a competing priority.

We call on all political parties to commit to four priorities below. These commitments would honour those already killed or seriously injured by preventing future harm and by building a transport system that is:

- More reliable – improving journey certainty and network resilience.
- More productive – supporting economic growth and efficient movement of people and goods.
- Better for everyone – delivering benefits across communities, businesses, and future generations

Restore a clear national goal through the Government Policy Statement

The New Zealand Chapter of the ACRS calls on all political parties to restore a clear national direction for road safety through the next Government Policy Statement on land transport. New Zealand needs a clear goal that the transport system should eliminate deaths and serious injuries. Anything short of that would be a step backwards from the level of ambition needed to drive sustained action, investment, monitoring, and accountability. This goal should be supported by measurable targets, transparent reporting, and a funded national road safety action plan.

Strengthen leadership, accountability, and independent oversight

Achieving meaningful reductions in deaths and serious injuries requires sustained leadership across central government, local government, enforcement, health, infrastructure agencies, and communities. New Zealand currently lacks a strong, enduring mechanism that keeps road safety consistently on the political agenda across electoral cycles. Australian experience shows that parliamentary mechanisms can help maintain focus: New South Wales has a Standing Committee on Road Safety, while Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety groups operate at Federal, Queensland, and New South Wales levels. Their effectiveness depends on committed members, but the existence of these mechanisms provides an avenue for briefings, inquiries, and identifying political allies. The ACRS calls on the next government to establish a parliamentary road safety leadership and accountability mechanism to maintain long-term focus across electoral cycles.

Invest in road safety as productivity, resilience, and harm reduction

Road safety investment should be recognised as one of New Zealand's most practical transport productivity investments. Safer roads reduce deaths and serious injuries, but by reducing crashes, they also reduce recurring delays, improve network reliability, support freight movement, reduce emergency response demands, and help people reach work, school, appointments, and home on time. Sustainable road safety investment should be prioritised to reduce harm and improve transport productivity^{5, 6}.

Restore evidence-based speed management as a core safety tool

Speed management is one of the most effective ways to reduce crash likelihood and severity^{4, 7}. The New Zealand Chapter of the ACRS calls for speed limits that are safe, appropriate, intuitive, and user-friendly. Speed limits should reflect the function, design, roadside environment, crash risk, and users of each road, supported by infrastructure and enforcement. Safer speeds also support wider outcomes, including encouraging walking and cycling as safe transport modes, reduced noise, improved air quality, and lower crash-related disruption.

References

1. NZ Transport Annual Crash Statistics for 2021 (www.transport.govt.nz/statistics-and-insights/safety-annual-statistics/)
2. NZ Transport Agency Crash Analysis System (CAS).
3. Matariki Aotearoa (2026) The Official Guide to the Māori New Year, (<https://matariki.co.nz/matariki-aotearoa-the-official-guide-to-the-maori-new-year>).
4. The Impact of Change in Speed Limit at Three Sites (<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/speed-management-guide-road-to-zero-edition/wsp-the-impact-of-change-in-speed-limit-of-three-sites-report.pdf>)
5. NZ Transport Agency Monetised Benefits and Costs Manual (<https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/monetised-benefits-and-costs-manual/Monetised-benefits-and-costs-manual-volume-1-procedures.pdf>)
6. Flow (2025) Network disruption cost of serious crashes (<https://at.govt.nz/media/4q4dcjpp/auckland-transport-network-disruption-cost-serious-crash.pdf>).
7. ACRS Policy Position Statement – Speed Management ([ACRS-Speed-Management-PPS-2023.pdf](#))

The Australasian College of Road Safety believes:

We should prevent all fatal and serious injury on our roads

It is never acceptable that people are killed or seriously injured in the road traffic system. 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.

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 of 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.

Policy positions must be evidence based

All ACRS policy positions will be adaptive and demonstrably evidence based to ensure that our work is credible, reliable, informed and current, and assist in translating research into evidence-based policy and practice. We are committed to sharing knowledge and expertise through our work with a range of audiences, including the road safety community, policy makers and the general public. We help build capacity and skills in road safety among researchers, policy makers and practitioners in Australasia and globally.



About the Australasian College of Road Safety

The ACRS is the region's peak membership association for road safety with a vision of eliminating death and serious injury on the road.

Members

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

Purpose

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.

Objectives

Our objectives include the:

- Promotion of road safety as a critical organisational objective within government, business and the community.
- Promotion and advocacy of policies and practices that support harm elimination.
- Improvement of relative safety outcomes for vulnerable demographic and user groups within the community.
- Promotion of post-crash policies and practices.
- Promotion of a collegiate climate amongst all those with responsibilities for and working in road safety.

Visit: www.acrs.org.au

