

ACRS Submission



2023-24 Pre-budget Submission

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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 ACRS 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 2023-24 Budget. It comes at a critical time for road safety. The release of the Australian National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 was delayed until December 2022, and as at the date of writing this submission we are yet to see the release of the accompanying Action Plan, even though we are now two years into the Strategy. We can and must do better. During these two years of delay and inaction, more Australians have died or been seriously injured on our roads, with 2022 being the worst year for fatalities in this country since 2017(1). Australia must do more to demonstrate commitment to road safety as a national priority, to turn these statistics around and align with the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety 2021-2030.

Addressing road safety requires more targeted and strategic funding than simply handing over billions of dollars for building more roads and adding new lanes to ease congestion. It requires separate funding to address the whole system, embedded as a longer-term commitment to road safety. Funding must be 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. This fundamental issue about how road safety funding is prioritised must be addressed in the 2023-24 Budget.

ACRS principles

ACRS believes that the causes of deaths and injury on roads are predictable and possible to eliminate. 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. For example, lower socio-economic status reduces the power to purchase newer, safer vehicles. 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, 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(2).

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 2023-24 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(3). The National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 acknowledges this annual cost as \$30 billion in Australia(4). 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 2023-24. 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, and policy advice.

Currently in Australia, 3 people die and over 100 are seriously injured in road crashes each and every day(4). And the numbers are getting worse, not better(1, 4). If we are going to address this national crisis, the investments recommended in this submission are essential. This submission makes two general recommendations:

1. National road safety funding - \$0 new investment:

- \$5 billion per year allocated to dedicated road safety activity of all types, including non-infrastructure, from the infrastructure budget; and
- Analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Office of the investment required to achieve the National Road Safety Targets

2. Capacity building by ACRS – \$5.18 million new investment over 4 years:

- \$200,000 per year for a *road safety professionals accreditation program*;
- \$125,000 per year for *supporting and building road safety capacity in local government*;
- \$170,000 per year for *supporting the Australasian Road Safety Conference* including encouraging participation from road safety professionals from low- and middle-income countries;

- \$200,000 per year for *capacity building of road safety professionals in low- and middle- income countries*;
- \$200,000 per year for *establishing and maintaining a Best Practice and Policy Position Statement portfolio*;
- \$250,000 per year for *developing and maintaining a Road Safety Research Clearinghouse*; and
- \$150,000 per year for *establishing a Future Road Safety Leaders Program*.

These investment recommendations are detailed in the following section.

1. National road safety funding

a) Road Safety Funding within the Federal Budget

The National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 committed that “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 goal of the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 is to reduce 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 sufficient, 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 National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 acknowledges the need for professional development for those working in road safety: "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, the ACRS is uniquely placed to assist in building capacity among road safety professionals. We propose multiple elements to this.

a) 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 per annum for four years

b) Local Government Capacity Building

The National Road Safety Strategy 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 77% of the road network(8), 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(9, 10).

In response to this need, ACRS has recently launched a Local Government Network. Funding is needed to enable the Network to provide support and advice to local councils through connecting local government road safety professionals across Australia. This would enable knowledge and information sharing within and

amongst 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.

c) Australasian Road Safety Conference (ARSC)

The Australasian Road Safety Conference is the region's premier road safety event with 711 delegates from 18 countries attending in 2022: Australia, Botswana, Canada, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Samoa, Scotland, Thailand, United States of America, and Vietnam. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts has supported the Conference since 2019 through purchasing a Gold Sponsorship package and scholarships for low- and middle- income country (LMIC) scholarships. In 2022, the scholarships funded 12 presenters from low- and middle- income countries. Most importantly, scholarship awardees have been inspired to act since ARSC2022, with numerous examples provided in the post-event evaluation survey.

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. It is the largest road safety conference in the Australasian region. The 2022 conference was held as a hybrid event, and the virtual platform, which houses conference presentations available to delegates for 6-months post-event, had been accessed over 3,000 times in the first 3 of those months.

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), ACRS 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.

d) International Outreach Project Expansion

Through a grant from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, the ARSC 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 mentors and LMIC professionals (mentees) to support, provide advice, and access the Australian-based ACRS network of Road Safety Professionals.
- Host an annual LMIC Networking Field Tour which brings 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 the LMIC Professional Mentorship Program (\$50,000) and annual LMIC Networking Field Tour (\$150,000).

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

e) Road Safety Policy Advice

The National Road Safety Strategy 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”(11). One of the Strategy’s 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”(4).

The diverse membership of the ACRS, bringing together researchers, practitioners, and industry, means we are uniquely placed to provide this type of contribution, informing local government, media, and the public, stimulating 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 through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and the Arts.

ACRS would like to strengthen this area of work by contributing to the translation of research into practice and providing best practice advice, thereby helping to advocate for better road safety measures and building understanding of road safety principles. To this end, we have begun to develop a series of Best Practice and Policy Position Statements, to inform and advise federal, state, and local government decisions on road safety, and to inform education and training to health practitioners on how to minimise the impacts of road

trauma on the health system. These Statements will cover a wide range of current road safety topics relevant to Australasia; they are intended to be state-of-the-art and will be reviewed every three years.

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

With funding support it will be possible to increase the scope, number, and dissemination of these Statements, for example by hosting policy meetings to encourage the prioritisation of issues and discuss contemporary evidence to inform these statements and advice to government.

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.

f) Road Safety Research Clearinghouse

Research clearinghouses serve multiple purposes. They can provide a searchable repository of references to research articles and publications on a particular topic and can also help to bridge the gap from research to policy/practice by providing a database of evidence-based programs. Clearinghouses have standards which must be met for an article or publication to be included, such as around transparency via open access to results and reporting of funding sources and conflicts of interest. Clearinghouses support evidence-based policy by distilling findings from trusted sources and assist decision makers in selecting interventions for which there is robust evidence. They can build capacity and strengthen relationships with policy makers, providing access to government of information critical for development of effective road safety policy. Clearinghouses can also commission research to fill gaps which are identified in the existing research by the clearinghouse itself.

While examples exist in other countries of road safety clearinghouses, no similar mechanism to bring together sound evidence on road safety exists in Australia in a searchable database, freely accessible to all.

The ACRS is uniquely placed to establish and maintain a road safety clearinghouse in Australia because of our diverse membership. Our members include all of the major university-based and other government/non-government road safety related research institutions throughout Australia. This network would ease access not only to research as it is published, but to information about research projects planned and currently underway, and process of adding to the clearinghouse would identify gaps, overlaps, and potentials for collaboration to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of Australia's road safety research.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to road safety research through the development and maintenance of a Road Safety Research Clearinghouse.

Financial Commitment Required: \$1,000,000 i.e., \$250,000 per annum for four years.

g) Future Road Safety Leaders Program

Effective leadership in the road safety sector is essential for positive and productive working relationships among policy makers and stakeholders. Poorly aimed, timed, or executed advocacy not only puts strain on these important relationships, but can have an opportunity cost for valid and necessary policy change.

The ACRS would establish a future leaders program designed for young people working in road safety who already have much of the road safety knowledge, and are looking to gain advocacy, media, and leadership skills in the road safety context. The program would involve face-to-face workshops in Canberra to meet with policy makers and politicians, to learn how to successfully advocate for and influence policy and build productive advocacy relationships. The program would also include an advocacy project, the results of which would be presented at the following Australasian Road Safety Conference.

The program will ensure that the next generation of road safety professionals are equipped to effectively lead and work with policy makers.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to the next generation of road safety leaders through establishing a Future Road Safety Leaders Program.

Financial Commitment Required: \$600,000 i.e. \$150,000 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 2023-24 include \$5.18 million over 4 years in new road safety 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, ACRS 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 expansion of the LMIC Professional Mentorship Program and an annual LMIC Networking Field Tour;
- Four-year commitment to road safety policy and advocacy development through establishing an extensive Best Practice and Policy Position Statement portfolio;
- Four-year commitment to road safety research through establishing and maintaining a Road Safety Research Clearinghouse;
- Four-year commitment to the next generation of road safety leaders through establishing a Future Road Safety Leaders Program.

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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