

## Every day on Australia's roads:

**3** people lose their lives

**110** people are seriously injured.<sup>1</sup>

Worse, while we have been making some progress with saving lives, serious injuries are going up, and in the past 12 months, the number of deaths also increased. And this is preventable. We can do better, and we must.

### The Australasian College of Road Safety calls on the next Australian Government to:

- 1.** Ensure all new roads are designed for useability and managed to 3 safety stars or better for all road users
- 2.** Publish State and Territory road infrastructure safety star ratings or equivalent
- 3.** Link Commonwealth road infrastructure funding to safety outcomes for all road users
- 4.** Commit to a properly resourced and mandated Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety
- 5.** Give the Australian Transport Safety Bureau the powers to investigate road crashes
- 6.** Keep up with European vehicle safety standards, timeliness and scope
- 7.** Recognise the links between climate change and road safety
- 8.** Improve road safety to combat poverty in neighbouring countries

## **Ensure all new roads are designed for useability and managed to 3 safety stars or better for all road users**

To reduce fatal and serious injuries on our roads, safety must be fully incorporated into the engineering design and management processes. The road system should be predictable and easy to use for road users, to enhance safety. Star ratings provide a simple and objective measure of the level of safety which is 'built-in' to the road for vehicle occupants, motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians. A person's risk of death or serious injury is halved for each incremental improvement in the star rating of a road<sup>2</sup>.

## **Publish State and Territory road infrastructure safety star ratings or equivalent**

The public have a right to know how safe the roads they are travelling on are and whether the billions of taxpayer dollars spent on our roads are in fact prioritising safety. Publication of the star ratings provides a simple overview of where infrastructure investment is most needed to improve the safety of our roads. The star ratings of the rural and urban main road networks, for all road users, should be published and updated regularly, with explanation of what the ratings mean.

## **Link Commonwealth road infrastructure funding to safety outcomes for all road users**

The Commonwealth provides billions of taxpayer dollars to the States and Territories every year in road infrastructure funding, but too often the focus is on saving time rather than saving lives. States and Territories should be resourced, and then obliged to, provide data demonstrating the safety outcomes of road projects, including reasons why potential safety benefits have not been achieved. This direct linkage of funding to safety outcomes will provide transparency and accountability for the money, and help to identify systemic issues that need to be addressed to maximise safety benefits and prevent crashes.

## **Commit to a properly resourced and mandated Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety**

Our progress in improving road safety has stalled and we have failed to achieve our previous road safety targets<sup>3</sup>. Road trauma remains the leading cause of death and serious injury among Australia's children and youth<sup>4</sup>, and in the top three causes for everyone aged 1-45 years<sup>5</sup>. A properly resourced Australian Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, mandated with broad terms of reference and authority would help to ensure this issue is given the priority and oversight needed to turn this around.

## **Give the Australian Transport Safety Bureau the powers to investigate road crashes**

The ATSB's independent, no-blame investigations of air, marine and rail crashes are used to reduce the risk of future crashes through the implementation of safety action by the industry and by Government. But the current legislation prevents investigation of road crashes. This role should be extended to allow targeted investigations of systemic safety issues on our roads where about 10 times as many people die every year as air, marine and rail crashes combined<sup>6</sup>.

## **Keep up with European vehicle safety standards, timeliness and scope**

Australia is falling behind the European Union on vehicle safety standards, with the EU having mandated a package of safety improvements for all motor vehicles in 2019. These include advanced emergency braking systems, intelligent speed assistance, and event data recorders, which will come into effect in 2022. Australia currently has mandated none of these technologies mandated for every vehicle and is needlessly missing out on the safety benefits. For example, if the entire fleet of vehicles in Australia was fitted with AEB, an estimated 5-10% of fatalities and 9-12% of serious injuries could be avoided<sup>7</sup>.

## **Recognise the links between climate change and road safety**

Climate change adversely affects road safety and vice versa. Climate change results in more extreme weather events which cause road crashes and divert road spending into maintenance, rather than safety improvements. In contrast, some changes that improve road safety will also improve climate. Travel by personal vehicles is less safe and has greater environmental impacts than public transport. More and better Government investment is needed in public transport, active travel and sustainable freight options, and a transition away from personal fossil-fuel based transport including through incentives such as tightening vehicle emissions standards and improving equitable access to public and active transport options for everyone.

## **Improve road safety to combat poverty in neighbouring countries**

Low- and middle-income countries account for around 90% of road fatalities worldwide. The corresponding injury burden of hospitalisations, disability and unemployment is costly and adds to persisting poverty in many of our low to middle-income neighbours. Australia can assist by increasing aid and development funding to improve road safety management capacity, leadership and programs, encompassing institutional and legislative frameworks, enforcement and safety advocacy, and an evidence-based cycle of monitoring and evaluation to reduce road trauma.

## **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; and
- Promotion of a collegiate climate amongst all those with responsibilities for and working in road safety.

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1 [https://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/road\\_deaths\\_australia\\_monthly\\_bulletins](https://www.bitre.gov.au/publications/ongoing/road_deaths_australia_monthly_bulletins) ; <https://www.officeofroadsafety.gov.au/data-hub/serious-injuries-data>

2 <https://irap.org/3-star-or-better/>

3 <https://www.roadsafety.gov.au/nrss>

4 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/australias-children/contents/health/infant-child-deaths>; <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/unintentional-injuries>

5 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/life-expectancy-death/deaths-in-australia/contents/leading-causes-of-death>

6 <https://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2020/ar-2020-047/>; <https://www.onrsr.com.au/publications/corporate-publications/rail-safety-report>; <https://www.amsa.gov.au/fatalities-2016-2019>

7 [https://researchmgt.monash.edu/ws/portalfiles/portal/311034119/290354633\\_oa.pdf](https://researchmgt.monash.edu/ws/portalfiles/portal/311034119/290354633_oa.pdf)