

ACRS 2026-27 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 Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

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Introduction

The Australasian College of Road Safety is a registered charity, and 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.

ACRS believes that we should prevent all fatal and serious injuries on our roads; the road traffic system must be made safe for all road users; system designers should aim to prevent human error and mitigate its consequences; life and health are not exchangeable for other benefits in society; and that all ACRS policy positions must be evidence based.

The allocation of funding in the 2026-27 Federal Budget should be made with these principles in mind. It is economically responsible to do so. Preventable road trauma costs up to an estimated 3% of Gross Domestic Product in wealthy countries such as Australia.(1) The National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 (NRSS) acknowledges this annual cost as \$30 billion in Australia.(2) That was before the 5 years in a row of increased trauma levels we have experienced to the end of 2025.(3) Investing in road safety will reduce this preventable and costly burden.

ACRS is pleased to make this pre-budget submission. It comes at a critical time for road safety. We are now halfway through the NRSS, and we are nowhere near meeting our targets. In 2025 there were 1,314 people killed on Australian roads, and tens of thousands more seriously injured.(3) We haven't seen this many people killed on our roads since 2010. Instead of halving the number of deaths, our target to 2030, we have wiped out 15 years of progress in stopping them. Australia hasn't seen 5 years in a row of increased rate of road deaths since the 1930s.(3-5) This is costing us billions of dollars unnecessarily. Failure to address road trauma is, in economic terms, poor economic management. In human terms, it's inexcusable. Something has to change.

Addressing road safety requires more targeted and strategic funding than simply handing over billions of dollars for building more roads and adding new lanes falsely hoping to ease congestion.(6, 7) 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 2026-27 budget.

ACRS recommendations

This submission presents recommendations for investments in road safety in the Australian Federal Budget 2026-27. The investments related to national road safety funding and achieving the road safety targets, and to capacity building within the road safety sector through increased support for local councils and professional development.

Currently in Australia, 3 people are killed and over 100 are seriously injured in road crashes every day, and these numbers are getting worse, not better. 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:
 - a. \$5 billion per year allocated to dedicated road safety activities of all types, including non-infrastructure activities, from the infrastructure budget; and
 - b. Analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Office of the investment required to achieve the National Road Safety Targets
2. Capacity building by ACRS - \$12,906,489 new investment over four years:
 - a. \$425,000 per year for supporting the ACRS Capacity Building Program;
 - b. \$670,000 per year for supporting and building road safety capacity in local government;
 - c. \$595,000 per year for capacity building of road safety professionals in low- and middle-income countries;
 - d. \$230,000 per year for Australasian Road Safety Conference support;
 - e. \$440,000 per year for road safety professional development;
 - f. \$275,000 per year for developing and maintaining a Road Safety Research Clearinghouse;
 - g. \$450,000 per year for road user capacity building.

These investment recommendations are detailed in the following sections.

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”.⁽²⁾ This commitment is in line with recommendations from the report on the inquiry into the previous National Strategy,⁽⁸⁾ and of the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety’s report.⁽⁹⁾ 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 current routine 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.

Road safety must be addressed as a whole system, with a long-term commitment required. Funding for road infrastructure is not necessarily road safety funding – it must be targeted and strategic, and include programs and projects outside infrastructure. The 2026-27 Budget must demonstrate prioritisation of road safety to address the increasing, yet preventable trauma levels on our roads.

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.(2) 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.(8) 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 a 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 report, 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 positioned to assist in capacity building among road safety professionals. We propose multiple elements to support this.

a) ACRS Capacity Building Program

There is currently no global standard or clear definition for what it means to be a road safety professional – despite the significant responsibility these positions/roles have in designing, implementing and monitoring road safety initiatives.

ACRS has initiated the Capacity Building Program for road safety professionals from all disciplines, to empower them with trans-disciplinary foundational knowledge to contribute to their roles and

organisations. The Program fills a major gap in road safety education and capability growth, which will in turn reduce road trauma, as evidence-based training is applied in workplaces across the globe.

There will be 4 elements to the transdisciplinary Road Safety Capacity Building Program:

1. The Road Safety Body of Knowledge (Road Safety BoK) – a digital, open-source learning resource
2. The Road Safety Online Learning Program – providing a foundational overview of the road safety landscape for road safety professionals
3. A register of ACRS endorsed road safety training
4. Certification of a Road Safety Professional

With Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRSCA) seed funding, and the support of over a hundred volunteer road safety experts from around the world, ACRS have successfully developed initial elements of the Road Safety BoK and online learning program as proof of concept.

Unfortunately, DITRSCA seed funding will end 31 Jan 2026. As a registered charity, ACRS cannot financially support the Program after this date, as it is not yet self-sustaining. Without sponsorship, the potential of the Capacity Building Program will remain unfulfilled.

Support of the Capacity Building Program over the next 4 years will provide the necessary time and resources to fully implement the program: develop a road safety professional certification model, a register of ACRS endorsed road safety training, further development and continuous improvement of the Road Safety BoK and Training offerings, and a self-sustaining business model.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to the ARSC in the form of a sponsorship of the ACRS Capacity Building Program (\$425,000).

Financial Commitment required: \$1,778,041 i.e. \$425,000 per annum for four years plus 3% CPI allowance.

b) Local Government capacity building

Local Government ACRS memberships

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.(2) The 537 local councils across Australia have responsibility for around 75% of the road network,(10) 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.(11, 12)

To enhance road safety capacity at local government level, membership of the ACRS' Local Government Network would be provided to every local council in Australia. Our activities for members include continuing education through regular webinars, workshops, and the annual Australasian Road Safety Conference, a weekly road safety newsletter, and access to the peer-reviewed Journal of Road Safety, extensive

networking opportunities, as well as guidance on evidence-based policy through ACRS Policy Position Statements.

Memberships for local councils would provide these benefits to road, traffic and planning staff in local councils, helping build capacity and professional development opportunities and increasing the profile and prioritisation of road safety within local councils. Doing so will ensure that the professionals who make decisions about roads and the road system at the local government level will have a good understanding of the most effective road safety strategies to produce the safest outcomes. A lack of coordination and awareness of successes being achieved elsewhere can be a significant barrier, resulting in efforts and discovery needlessly being duplicated in isolation. The ACRS Local Government Network has a strong track record of success, with knowledge sharing among members leading to replication of innovative practice, with significantly reduced costs, and new Network Safety Plans being developed.

Local Government Network Sponsorship

The Local Government Network connects professionals across government, industry, academic and community sectors, creating platforms for knowledge-sharing, mentoring and evidence-based action.

Sponsorship of the Local Government Network provides prominent brand visibility, association with sector leadership, and opportunities to engage directly with professionals and stakeholders shaping the future of road safety. Supporting the Network, the Department will advance diversity, foster international collaboration, build capacity, and improve road safety outcomes – all while being recognised as champions of evidence-based road safety progress.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to supporting and building road safety capacity in local government in the form of Local government ACRS memberships (\$600,000) and sponsorship of the ACRS Local Government Network (\$70,000)

Financial commitment required: \$2,803,030 i.e. \$670,000 per annum for four years plus 3% CPI allowance.

c) Low- and Middle-Income Countries capacity building

LMIC Networking Field Tours

The LMIC Networking Field Tour will be a unique annual initiative designed to foster global collaboration and knowledge exchange in road safety. Each year, after an extensive application review process, the program will bring together around 20 road safety professionals from LMICs to connect with international peers, learn from leading experts, and experience real-world examples of best-practice road safety initiatives.

Participants will engage in presentations from senior road safety leaders, take part in site-visits to training facilities and organisations, and build lasting professional networks that strengthen global capacity to reduce road trauma.

LMIC Road Safety Professional Exchange Program

The LMIC Exchange Program will pair road safety professionals from LMIC with Australian counterparts for a hands-on, knowledge-sharing experience. Over several weeks, participants will immerse themselves in each others' workplaces and systems, collaborating on real-world projects, exchanging expertise, and gaining valuable insights into different approaches to road safety challenges.

This program will build global partnerships, strengthen professional capacity, and foster innovative solutions by providing participants with practical, on-the-ground experience in diverse contexts.

LMIC Road Safety Professional Mentorship Program

The LMIC Professional Mentorship Program will connect road safety professionals from LMICs with experienced international mentors, providing guidance, advice, and access to a powerful global network of road safety experts. This program will build capacity, foster collaboration, and empower LMIC professionals to share their work, gain new insights, and develop solutions to the unique road safety challenges in their communities.

The Program will empower researchers and practitioners from LMICs to share their vital road safety findings on an international stage, through the Journal of Road Safety. By pairing emerging authors with experienced mentors, the program will provide guidance through every stage of the publications process – building confidence, improving research and practice visibility, and increasing the representation of LMIC perspectives and experiences in global road safety.

International Outreach Chapter Sponsorship

The ACRS International Outreach Chapter has over 380 members from more than 30 countries, including 22 low- and middle- income countries, where 93% of global road deaths occur. It is co-Chaired by three members from Malaysia, Botswana and New Zealand,

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 for the IOC from ACRS membership within Australia and globally.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to capacity building of road safety professionals in low- and middle-income countries in the form of the annual LMIC Networking Field Tour (\$200,000), the LMIC Road Safety Professional Exchange Program (\$180,000), LMIC Professional Mentorship Program (\$135,000) and International Outreach Chapter sponsorship (\$80,000)

Financial Commitment Required: \$2,489,258 i.e. \$595,000 per annum for four years plus 3% CPI allowance.

d) Australasian Road Safety Conference (ARSC)

The Australasian Road Safety Conference is the biggest annual conference dedicated to road safety in the world. In 2025, there were almost 650 delegates from 18 countries – Australia, Austria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Denmark, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, United States of America and Viet Nam. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA), has supported the conference since 2019 through a Platinum sponsorship package, International Plenary Speakers package, and scholarships for low- and middle- income countries, and rural and regional areas. These measures have proven their success, with growing international recognition of and attendance at these conferences, and consistent feedback from the post-event evaluation surveys that scholarship awardees have been inspired to act following their attendance.

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.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to the ARSC in the form of a Platinum Sponsorship (\$60,000), LMIC scholarships package (\$80,000), Regional and Rural Scholarship package (\$60,000) and International Plenary Speakers package (\$30,000)

Financial Commitment required: \$962,234 i.e. \$230,000 per annum for four years plus 3% CPI allowance.

e) Road Safety Professional Development

The ACRS has system-wide influence on the National Road Safety Strategy priorities and actions, and provides support for work towards Vision Zero. These programs will increase community education, awareness, and collaboration by providing road safety professionals with consistent, current, and evidence-based information, and a network to support a positive road safety culture. With ACRS' breadth of membership and influence in the road safety sector, these align with all NRSS priority areas. The quality and reliability of information available within the road safety community will be greatly impacted, thereby improving road safety outcomes overall.

Future Road Safety Leaders Program

The Future Leaders program is designed to empower early and mid-career road safety professionals with the advocacy, leadership and communication skills needed to influence policy and drive real change in communities. Through a combination of mentoring, hands-on projects, and high-level engagement participants will learn how to navigate political systems, develop effective messaging, and collaborate with key stakeholders.

Each year, participants will take part in an in-person policy workshop, engage in a collaborative advocacy project guided by experienced mentors, and present their outcomes at the Australasian Road Safety Conference. The program fills a critical gap in leadership development for emerging leaders – providing a structured, impactful pathway to become effective changemakers in the road safety sector.

A successful pilot of this program during 2024-25 supported by the DITRDCSA, saw each of the participating Future Leaders, as well as the road safety professionals they engaged with, find significant value in the program, gaining insights, knowledge and skills from the experience. All participants strongly support the continuation of the program.

Regional Road Safety Forums

The Regional Road Safety Forums will provide a powerful platform for education, collaboration, and action, bringing together regional road safety professionals, policymakers, and community members to address the unique challenges of reducing road trauma outside major urban centres. Each forum will feature targeted presentations by local road safety experts on priority areas such as safer roads, vehicle safety, protective equipment, behaviour change and protecting vulnerable road users.

These events will foster cross-sector collaboration and knowledge-sharing, create meaningful networking opportunities, and enable attendees to take forward practical, evidence-based strategies in their own communities. They will empower regional professionals and communities to implement initiatives that save lives and reduce serious injuries on regional roads.

Road Safety Body of Knowledge

The ACRS Road Safety Body of Knowledge is an industry-first initiative that brings together the essential concepts, terminology and evidence-based insights that define the road safety profession. The Road Safety Body of Knowledge includes guides on topics related to road safety, with links to suggested training courses and related evidence. Led by Australia and curated by experts in road safety from around the world, the Body of Knowledge serves as a trusted, centralised resource for global professionals across all sectors, supporting consistency, credibility and informed decision making. Funding will ensure that the Body of Knowledge remains accessible, authoritative, and widely adopted.

Journal of Road Safety

The peer-reviewed Journal of Road Safety is the leading source for road safety evidence in Australasia. It is the forum for novel research into road safety initiatives, and features contributing authors from Australasia and globally, introducing new perspectives to research and practice across NRSS priority areas. The JRS have achieved an Impact Factor, a key indicator of its importance as an international scientific journal.

Importantly, the JRS is open access, meaning that anyone can access the articles without having to pay for a subscription. This is vital in terms of ensuring that the most up-to-date evidence on what works in road safety is freely available and accessible to everyone. Sponsorship of the JRS will ensure that it is able to remain open access, which is rare for academic journals.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to capacity building of road safety professionals in the form of Future Road Safety Leaders Program (\$230,000), Regional Road Safety Forums (\$75,000), Road Safety Body of Knowledge (\$75,000), Journal of Road Safety (\$60,000).

Financial Commitment required: \$1,840,796 i.e. \$440,000 per annum for four years plus 3% CPI allowance.

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 bridge the gap from research to policy and 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 assisting decision makers in selecting interventions for which there is robust evidence. They can build capacity and strengthen relationships with policy makers, providing access to 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 on 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 the 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 (\$275,000).

Financial Commitment required: \$1,150,497 i.e. \$275,000 per annum for four years plus 3% CPI allowance.

g) Road User Capacity Building

The Road User Assessment Program (RUAP) is a world-first initiative designed to complement existing road and vehicle safety programs by focusing on the often-overlooked pillar of the Safe System: safe road users. Road users are imperfect, with simple mistakes sometimes leading to crashes – work is needed to address this gap in road safety. While current efforts successfully target safer roads, vehicles and speeds, there is no structured, objective framework to assess and improve the skills, knowledge and behaviours of road users themselves.

Building on extensive research and stakeholder input, the RUAP proposes a rating framework inspired by programs such as ANCAP and AusRAP. The program would evaluate road users across key dimensions – including knowledge, risk management, pre-trip preparation, and post-incident practices – using advanced tools such as telematics, simulation and data analytics.

Funding will support the development of robust ratings scales, validation through real-world performance data, and stakeholder engagement to create a scalable, consumer-driven system that improves road user behaviour and advances global road safety outcomes.

Proposal: Four-year commitment to capacity building of road users in the form of the Road Users Assessment Program (\$450,000).

Financial commitment required: \$1,882,632 i.e. \$450,000 per annum for four years plus 3% CPI allowance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Road safety is an urgent and increasing issue in Australia. After five consecutive years of increase in the number and rate of people killed on our roads, as a country we cannot afford to continue to neglect this area.

ACRS calls for investment of:

1. National road safety funding - \$0 new investment:
 - a. \$5 billion per year allocated to dedicated road safety activities of all types, including non-infrastructure activities, from the infrastructure budget; and
 - b. Analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Office of the investment required to achieve the National Road Safety Targets
2. Capacity building by ACRS - \$12,906,489 new investment over four years:
 - a. \$425,000 per year for supporting the ACRS Capacity Building Program;
 - b. \$670,000 per year for supporting and building road safety capacity in local government;
 - c. \$595,000 per year for capacity building of road safety professionals in low- and middle-income countries;
 - d. \$230,000 per year for Australasian Road Safety Conference support;
 - e. \$440,000 per year for road safety professional development;
 - f. \$275,000 per year for developing and maintaining a Road Safety Research Clearinghouse;
 - g. \$450,000 per year for road user capacity building.

ACRS welcomes the opportunity to make this submission and contribute to improved road safety in Australia. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information.



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