



A Safe System: The Road Safety Discussion

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ACRS President's Opening Address Notes

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On behalf of the College, welcome to our 2013 conference. Thank you to the SA Chapter as our hosts.

Thank you for the welcome to us all.

Last year in Sydney we agreed at the Conference to take your road safety research results to build knowledge, and to help translate that into **action**.

This year we have a focus on how to spread the messages from those actions to ensure the community understands from the evidence what real benefits are possible.

In the last twelve months thousands unfortunately died and were injured on Australian and New Zealand roads. But many thousands were not injured and did not die because of the collective action of so many of you over the past years.

Your combined efforts will have helped to keep those numbers down, but we have a lot more to do. Don't forget our National Road Safety Strategy sets out commitment to the Vision Zero approach.

So what did we, the College, and what did I do to translate research into action.

Here are some projects, there were many others both local and national.

We worked with the NHMRC to develop a National Road Safety Research framework. Many of you contributed. This should help create better synergies in our research.

We made a submission to all Federal parliamentarians to demonstrate the cross portfolio impacts of road crashes and the benefits to the national economy and social fabric of many simple, well known solutions.

We discussed with the then Minister for Road Safety, Catherine King who spoke to us in Sydney last year and her successor Sharon Bird regarding an improvement to the Federal

Government Road Safety Policy. We worked equally closely with the then Opposition spokesman Darren Chester on the same topic.

It is very pleasing to see the new Federal Government's road safety policy. A new approach.

While we may not have a specific Minister for Road Safety any longer, something of a disappointment, we do have a comprehensive policy embracing;

- funding for safer roads,
- a major economic study into the overall impacts of road trauma,
- continued support for ANCAP, Keys 2 Drive,
- a better approach to cycling safety,
- greater research collaboration and better communication with relevant organisations and programs with
- a specific commitment that road safety would be an integral part of the work of the Federal Departmental of Infrastructure and Transport.

We understand that the simplification of ministerial and departmental titles recently announced with a "back to basics" government that provides a new opportunity for a multi discipline approach. The new Assistant Minister responsible the Hon Jamie Briggs from Adelaide was not able to be with us today. We have asked him to drop in if he has the chance.

Of course next year we will have a representative from the new Motorist's Party in the Senate, perhaps we should all join.

We will work them as with all parties to demonstrate how we can save lives and injuries..

I was fortunate to attend the first Vision Zero meeting in Stockholm in May this year. A meeting of Ministers, senior transport officials, well accredited researchers, transport business leaders, insurance manager and others..

The words of the Swedish Infrastructure Minister, an active participant over the three day meeting were instructive; she said;

"Launching Vision Zero was approved by all the political parties in our Parliament in 1997. Since then attitudes towards the policy have gone from scepticism and disbelief - to an overwhelming acceptance from the Swedish public and stakeholders... we have been able to reduce the number of deaths on the Swedish roads more cost efficiently than we did some years ago. In 1995 the cost for saving one life on the road was over 1 billion SEK. Today a more innovative strategy means the cost per life saved is down to 50-100 million SEK. "

I wonder if we can make that claim here yet?

That meeting also challenged road and rail regulators to join in safety programs. We could do more of that here.

I have championed the case for improved collaboration across portfolios, across industry, across researchers and also transport modes and to encourage some rationalisation of road safety Conferences..

While we were pleased to participate in the COAG Ministers Forum in Tasmania on road safety we believe it should be reviewed and a wider range of senior business, researchers and community leaders be encouraged to participate in annual small, high level forum be established focused on the collaboration outlined in the new government policy.

The College has opened new contacts with business groups and companies.

Our ACRS Weekly Alert has become a highly sought after member benefit and our Journal is growing and also in demand.

From my work at ANCAP I am encouraged by the rapid introduction of new technologies which are emerging in new cars and trucks, in road infrastructure and in driver assistance. Crash rates of these vehicles are down at least 25%. These will revolutionise road travel in the next decade and be vital for the planning future transport infrastructure. The driver, the cause of human error we spend so much time, is now being engineered out.

Car manufacturers are now setting timetables for cars that won't crash. I wonder if we will be ready with roads that such cars can travel on and drivers and passengers will accept. If not? Why not?

The Swedish government for example, while not directly supporting car manufacturers, is a lead facilitator with a large research consortium which is undertaking such integration. Volvo of course is a major beneficiary.

Why do we not have such a consortium here with the Auto CRC and other relevant manufacturing and service companies, research entities and professional organisations? Our car manufactures invest very heavily in safety products but unfortunately they are often left out of the road safety network.

Fred Wegman the SA Thinker in Residence on Road Safety made some good suggestions in establishing better collaboration, which should not be limited to South Australia. As Brian Schmidt the recent Australian Nobel Prize winner stated, Australia needs to cooperate with the world to ensure we build scale in research.

I have just returned from three weeks driving in the USA. I saw a lot of Volvos, not one Australian car. The car I hired had the Ford MyKey as standard, limiting the top speed to 130kmh. Why is our market different?

The Productivity Commission Automotive Inquiry should have the terms of reference expanded to look at not only what consumers want, to review the type of future cars already available in other markets which will save lives and injuries and reduce the \$27bn cost of road trauma in Australia. Ford have been successful in designing in Australia a 5 star ANCAP rated light commercial vehicle for their world market, if we are to provide any assistance let's make sure the cars we make here have a purpose and are demanded not only here but in world markets.

The College is keen to offer assistance to ensure we can achieve world class road safety research quality and scale though such collaboration.

So last year, we were at the Conference to “expand our reach”

Where you successful last year in that task?

I am sure we will learn from the many presentations that you were.

Will we continue to be successful.

“Yes we can”, to borrow a phrase, **together**.

This has to be an extension of last year. Not only a focus on what is the problem with the media, but how do we use the media to expand our reach, to build a community who are calling out for, no, demanding a road transport system where crashes and the associate trauma are no longer acceptable.

We have a great but achievable challenge.

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President

Australasian College of Road Safety

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