

Nicole Rosie
Chief Executive
Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency
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16 June 2024

Dear Nicole,

New Zealand Transport Agency proposed cuts to road safety staff

As the region's peak membership association for road safety, the Australasian College of Road Safety has significant concerns about the ramifications of the NZ Transport Agency proposal to disestablish nearly all positions within the organisation held by road safety professionals with expertise in the Safe System approach. This includes the proposed net loss of 20 road safety roles in the System Leadership Group, including roles focused on road safety initiatives for Māori. In addition, there are proposed reductions to other roles that make significant contributions to safety outcomes such as the area programme managers in Transport Services.

The draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024-34 (GPS) identifies safety as one of four key strategic outcomes and sets an expectation from Government that the draft GPS will deliver an improvement in safety and reduction in deaths and serious injuries.

The NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) has historically provided a high level of valuable road safety expertise, guidance and leadership which had enabled evidence-based policy and decision-making on road safety that is data-driven and aligned to best practice. The College is deeply concerned that the proposed reduction in road safety specific roles will result in a loss of road safety expertise at NZTA which will result in lack of capability and capacity for NZTA to play its national role in the delivery of the safety expectations in the GPS.

The System Leadership and Transport Services road safety team members have regularly presented at the annual ACRS conferences. The breadth and depth of work accepted and presented in this, the world's largest road safety peer-reviewed conference is testament to the quality of delivery and impact these teams have. These case studies have grown the reputation of NZTA in the international road safety sector.

The College is seeking assurance that the proposed staff cuts will not adversely impact the quality nor the timeliness of the following valuable products and services provided by NZTA which underpin the achievement of national road safety outcomes:

- Strategic engagement with key road safety stakeholders such as emergency services and the freight sector, and others in work-related road safety.
- Leadership and funding of national governance of road safety performance including national governance groups
- Road safety data, insights and research, including the SORTED study that integrates multiple data sets to provide a more complete picture of road harm nationally
- Technical expertise, leadership and input into key road safety policies and legislation

- National safety performance metrics, and monitoring and evaluation that enables road safety performance to be measured and held to account
- Map based road safety tools necessary for investment prioritisation such as MegaMaps and KiwiRAP
- Capacity building for the sector including the Safe System Engineering Workshop, which is the foundation road safety engineering qualification in New Zealand
- Programme management advice including the pipeline development tool and process of quality investment prioritisation aligned to government outcomes
- Incorporation of behavioural science in transport.

We understand that all government agencies are required to make efficiency savings at this time, however the proposed cuts to road safety staff far exceed a 7.5% organisation wide saving.

To summarise, the College is very concerned about the ramifications of the proposal to cut road safety staff and including system leadership and management roles which are foundational to road safety performance. This risks a lack of coherent implementation of national road safety objectives, lack of national thought leadership, losing contact with stakeholders and industry who have a stake in road safety, more fragmented road safety intervention, and ultimately a higher number of deaths and serious injuries. The College urges NZTA to reconsider the proposal, as we believe it puts at risk the national leadership and management layer for road safety in New Zealand - fundamental to the sectors' road safety capability and capacity which drives New Zealand's ability to deliver on expected road safety outcomes.

The College is seeking assurance from the NZ Transport Agency that the proposal will not impact the capacity and capability of the NZTA to deliver on its roles and responsibilities in road safety including the key products and services highlighted in this letter.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you at your earliest convenience. We can be contacted via email to Ingrid.johnston@acrs.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Durdin
Co-Chair NZ Chapter
ACRS



Dr Ingrid Johnston
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