

16 March 2026

ACT Climate Change Strategy Consultation Team  
ACT Government  
E: [climatechange@act.gov.au](mailto:climatechange@act.gov.au)

Dear Consultation Team,

#### ACRS Submission to Consultation on ACT Climate Change Strategy

The Australasian College of Road Safety (ACRS) 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 College is to support our members in their efforts to eliminate serious road trauma through knowledge sharing, professional development, networking and advocacy.

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 consultation seeks feedback on developing a new ACT Climate Change Strategy for 2026-2035. The consultation paper notes that 61% of ACT emissions in 2024-25 came from ground transport. The ACT Government is to be commended for the significant progress made in reduction of emissions from electricity generation in the ACT. Ground transport is now the next area in which significant gains need to be made.

The ACRS' Climate Change and Road Safety Policy Position Statement, attached, highlights several recommended policy measures to improve both climate change and road safety:

- Governments should implement the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recommendations because unmitigated climate change will result in road traffic injuries and other direct health and economic impacts;
- Governments must immediately invest in active travel, public transport and sustainable freight options, and disincentivise personal fossil-fuel based transport;
- Default 30 km/h speed limits for all residential areas;
- Governments should upgrade current infrastructure to prioritise active travel and public transport.

Implementation of these measures will have many co-benefits beyond saving lives through reduced emissions and road trauma, including reduced noise pollution and traffic congestion, increased physical exercise, reduced chronic health conditions, increased liveability and amenity, and reduced costs.(1-3) Recent studies in the ACT have found there are significant benefits to be gained from speed reductions, and that community acceptance is enhanced with consultation and implementation processes explaining the rationale and benefits.(4)

Coordinating the goals of the Climate Change Strategy with the goals of the Road Safety Strategy will be important to ensure actions are aligned and maximise the opportunities for realising co-benefits. Reducing speed limits, including ensuring compliant e-devices, and making active travel safer will in turn reduce the ACT's transport emissions.

The ACRS is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to this consultation and contribute to improved climate change response and road safety in the ACT. Please let us know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,



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CEO  
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Dr Rod Katz  
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# ACRS Policy Position Statement

## Climate Change and Road Safety

### Summary

Current and future climate change will have increasing adverse health impacts and reduce road safety. Life and health are not exchangeable for other benefits in society (e.g., economic or efficiency). As one of the key contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, the transport system must adapt to address climate change and road trauma. Both are preventable and must be addressed by improving the design and management of the transport system. Active and sustainable mobility options such as public transport must be prioritised to decarbonise the transport system and benefit road safety.

### Key policy positions

1. Governments should implement the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommendations because unmitigated climate change will result in road traffic injuries and other direct health and economic impacts.
2. Governments must immediately invest in active travel, public transport, and sustainable freight options, and disincentivise personal fossil fuel-based transport.
3. Default 30 km/h speed limits for all residential areas.
4. Governments should upgrade current infrastructure to prioritise active travel and public transport.

This policy position statement was developed by ACRS members including: Dr Oscar Oviedo-Trespalacios, Dr Brett Hughes, Karen Cogo, Dr Chika Sakashita, and Robynann Dixon.

**Date adopted: May 2023**

## Policy problem

Climate change is a significant challenge to the planet, affecting the environment, people's livelihoods, quality of life, and infrastructure.(1, 2) Climate action and good health are equally important Sustainable Development Goals.(3) Climate change and road trauma have interconnected causes, impacts, and policy solutions. Climate change threatens human health via direct impacts and reduces road safety and engagement in healthy and safer transport choices such as cycling, walking, and public transport during more frequent extreme weather.

The underlying cause of climate change is excessive greenhouse gas emissions, of which the transport sector in Australia is responsible for 17%.(4) Transport emissions have grown more than any other sector, increasing nearly 60% since 1990.(4) Climate change produces more extreme weather events and adverse weather conditions, which can cause road crashes, divert spending into infrastructure maintenance rather than safety improvements, and discourage the use of more sustainable and safer mobility options such as public transport. Significantly, shifts to public transport and other forms of low emissions transport can enhance health, employment, energy security, and equity.(5)

## Principles underpinning ACRS position

- Life and health are not exchangeable for other benefits in society (e.g., economic or efficiency); therefore, the transport system, one of the key contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, must adapt to address climate change and road trauma.
- It is never acceptable that people are killed or seriously injured in the road traffic system.
- Climate change's current and future consequences for health and quality of life are unacceptable and must be addressed through urgent action to mitigate the current and emerging climate change crisis.
- Road safety and climate change prevention must be aligned to maximise benefits for society.

## Evidence base

### **Road safety can benefit from climate action**

Public transport is the safest and most energy-efficient form of transportation.(6, 7) Australian research has confirmed that a mode shift from private vehicle to public transport (i.e., train, tram, or bus) for commuting would reduce not only total crashes but also severe crashes.(8) Better public transport access and coverage will also reduce the incidence of risky driving behaviours, such as inattentive and drug driving.(9) Shifting the balance of transport infrastructure, policy, and funding away from private fuel-based transport and towards public transport will prevent road trauma and increase the sustainability of the transport system. As public transport ridership increases, road safety outcomes will improve.

Public transport growth also supports climate action, using less fuel and energy than private car transport. Notably, the success of public transport relies on non-motorised transport (including walking and cycling) that acts as a feeder to public transport stops/terminals. However, the lack of access to safe walking, cycling, and public transport infrastructure is a critical barrier to modal shift strategies for green transport.(10)

The hierarchy of importance of road users in the transport system needs to prioritise active travel and public transport users over private vehicle occupants. This will also have important health and safety benefits as it will reduce emissions and increase physical activity. Public and private initiatives to reduce demand for

transport such as "working from home" arrangements and carpooling are also encouraged to address road safety and climate change.

Decarbonising road transport requires a large-scale shift from gasoline and diesel to biofuels, electricity, or hydrogen, either in dedicated battery-electric or fuel-cell vehicles or mixed configurations, such as plug-in hybrid-electric vehicles, as well as prioritising active travel and public transport.

### ***Climate change has a direct impact on road trauma***

*Climate change increases the occurrence and severity of risky weather events, reducing road users' safety.*

Climate change will increase the frequency of heavy rain and heatwave events.(11) An increase in rain is problematic for road safety because it reduces tyre-surface friction, impairs visibility for drivers, and makes vehicle handling more difficult. Greater rainfall frequency is expected to translate into higher collision counts,(12, 13) and heatwaves increase road fatalities.(14) Road pavements deteriorate faster with extreme weather resulting in potholes and other dangerous pavement damage. Advancements in vehicle safety technologies (such as advanced driver support systems) will not necessarily mitigate the increased risk because such technologies often do not work in risky weather situations such as rain.(15) These circumstances will also affect other road users such as pedestrians and cyclists as rain and heatwaves can result in falls, crashes, and health deterioration through heatstroke.

*Extreme weather from climate change will also create road hazards and emergency evacuations where motorists may drive in unsafe conditions.*

Disaster situations such as bushfires can create significant immediate and longer-term psychological stress for drivers, (16) increasing crash risk.(17, 18) The Country Fire Authority of Victoria dedicated a website to 'Staying safe in the car during a bushfire', noting that "*Car crashes are common in bushfires due to poor visibility*".(19) Driving through floodwater is highly risky and can result in property damage, injuries, or fatalities.(20)

*Climate change has the potential to deteriorate transport infrastructure in the Australasian region.*

Sea-level rise will compromise coastal infrastructure of all types,(21, 22) and the increased frequency of excessive summer heat may compromise bridge integrity.(23) Heavy rainfall and subsequent floods can cause long term damage to transport infrastructure.(24) Deteriorated infrastructure contributes to road crashes, and the increased need for maintenance diverts resources from upgrading the safety of the road network or mitigating climate change.(22, 25)

*Road safety improvements are needed to safely encourage more climate-friendly travel.*

Given the ongoing threats associated with climate change, individuals and communities can privately or through policy-based incentives reduce fossil fuel-based transport usage, such as increasing walking, cycling, or using personal mobility devices to travel. These changes to mobility patterns will affect risk exposure and safety outcomes as active travellers are vulnerable road users.(26) Given the link between motorised transport, climate change, and road trauma, lowering speed limits will help mitigate climate change and increase road safety.(27) Introducing 30 km/h speed limits for residential areas and better infrastructure for active transport should be priorities for governments at all levels.

### **Road safety practice must evolve to consider climate change**

Potential conflicts between road safety and climate change mitigation need to be managed. For example, trees on roadsides can be deadly in a crash,(27) however, planting and keeping trees is a meaningful way to mitigate climate change, provide shade, and reduce surface temperatures for pedestrians and cyclists.

Transport infrastructure construction to improve road safety requires significant amounts of natural raw materials. The extraction, transportation, and production of these materials produces waste, consumes energy, and emits greenhouse emissions. Significant benefits can be realised by finding new uses and solutions to reuse, repurpose, and repair civil infrastructure. Recycled, alternative, and sustainable materials can be successfully used in road infrastructure.(28) Road and transport infrastructure must address whole-of-life impacts of asset decisions and their future climatic risks through mitigative and adaptive responses.

### **Recommended policy actions**

1. Governments should implement the recommendations of the IPCC.
2. Governments immediately invest in public transport, active travel, and sustainable freight options, and disincentivise personal fossil fuel-based transport.
3. Implementation of 30 km/h speed limits for residential areas and access roads to public transport.
4. Governments should limit urban sprawl.
5. Governments should upgrade current infrastructure to prioritise public transport/active travel.
6. New road infrastructure projects must explicitly consider and reduce environmental impacts and increase safety.
7. Governments invest in developing infrastructure resilience against extreme weather events
8. Governments limit the number of vehicles on the road.
9. The use of sustainable and recycled materials should be prioritised for all road and transport infrastructure projects.
10. The private sector should be appropriately taxed according to their contribution to the social and economic costs of emissions.
11. The private and public sector should encourage sustainable transport for work-related travel and commuting.
12. Community organisations should advocate to governments for climate adaptation initiatives and take responsibility for their contributions to climate change.
13. Individuals need to prioritise public transport and active travel options over private fossil fuel-based transport.

### **ACRS actions**

1. Raise awareness of the relationship between climate change and road safety among members.
2. Advocate to road safety stakeholders to consider the impact of climate change and road safety.
3. Support the development of the knowledge base for strategies to increase road safety considering climate change.

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