

Address

Hon Michael O'Brien MP

**Minister for Finance
Minister for Police
Minister for Correctional Services
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Road Safety**

**Australasian College of Road Safety
National Conference**

**November 7 2013
8.50 am
The National Wine Centre**

I will begin by acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Kurna people and that we respect their continuing spiritual connection with this place.

Acknowledgements:

Lauchlan McIntosh, Australian College of Road Safety National President

Dr Jeremy Woolley, Australian College of Road Safety Chapter Chair, National Secretary and conference convenor

I would like to commend the Australasian College of Road Safety for convening this conference. I welcome participants from interstate, New Zealand, USA and Sweden who over the next two days will discuss issues and share information on the latest developments in road safety policy and research to help us to continue to make significant progress towards reducing road trauma over the next decade.

Of particular interest will be the discussions on what influences the public perception of road safety, and I welcome those journalists and communications experts who are here today to debate the important role the media plays in presenting our road safety messages to the community.

Over the last decade, the number of Australians killed on our roads has decreased by 24 per cent from 1715 in 2002 to 1310 in 2012. Across all jurisdictions, the strongest downward trends were achieved in New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania.

However no death or serious injury on our roads is acceptable or inevitable and the whole community must work together to address the trauma caused by everyday use of the roads, regardless of the circumstances or the people involved.

Young road users aged 16 years or under currently account for approximately 5.5 per cent of all Australian road deaths and we are thankful that this proportion is lower than at any other time over the past decade.

Passenger and pedestrian deaths have also decreased, but in contrast motorcyclist deaths show a marginally increasing trend. Males continue to account for approximately 72 per cent of all road fatalities – a similar percentage to ten years ago. We must together find ways to address this.

Evidence based, system wide changes to speed limits, vehicle safety and other system changes have contributed to the improvements in the road toll. However with the benefit of improved research, information and technology and through the efforts of a committed community I am confident that more can be done.

Here in South Australia we have come a long way to reducing road trauma. *Towards Zero Together – South Australia's Road Safety Strategy 2020* sets the direction for reducing serious casualties during the decade by at least 30% to less than 80 fatalities and less than 800 serious injuries per year by 2020. The strategy is supported with action plans that set out priority actions that are undertaken towards achieving the targets.

Achievements from the previous *South Australian Road Safety Action Plan 2011 and 2012* helped produce the State's lowest road toll on record in 2012 with 94 fatalities and 761 serious injuries.

The *Road Safety Action Plan 2013-2016* which the Government released in June this year is the next chapter towards achieving our target to reduce serious road casualties by at least 30 per cent by 2020.

The development of the Action Plan has been led by the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure in collaboration with key road safety stakeholders - South Australia Police, Motor Accident Commission, Royal Automobile Association, Local Government Association and the Centre for Automotive Safety Research, University of Adelaide together with 42 organisations on the Road Safety Stakeholder Reference Group, and will be delivered hand in hand with the community.

In South Australia young people aged 16 to 19 make up five per cent of our population, however they account for 12 per cent of our road deaths and serious injuries.

South Australia currently has the second-worst fatality rate per population for 16 to 19 year-olds in the country; almost double that of Victoria and New South Wales.

An important issue being addressed on the Action Plan is the over representation of young people in casualty crashes. As Minister for Road Safety I have introduced legislation into the South Australian Parliament which enhances the graduated licensing scheme for novice drivers, by introducing passenger and night time driving restrictions for P1 drivers and increasing the time on a provisional licence.

The proposed changes to the Graduated Licensing Scheme have been developed as a direct response to the evidence about the road crashes of 16 to 19 year olds in South Australia.

They aim to strike a balance between preserving the freedom afforded to our young drivers and reducing the risks they face.

Our own analysis shows that if passenger and night time restrictions were in place in South Australia five years ago then potentially we would not have had to endure;

22 fatalities

240 serious injuries

1397 minor injuries

The proposed changes have the support of major stakeholders including the health sector, police and emergency services and the RAA.

Saving young people's lives must take precedence over concerns about mobility and inconvenience, particularly when some restrictions would apply only to one year of a person's life.

In terms of where we have come from in achieving road safety gains – it is true that the traditional approach to road safety has resulted in lives and injuries being saved and will continue to provide benefits in the future. However, a new approach is required that takes into account all factors and the safe system principles are a key part to this.

South Australia has embraced a new approach and a number of recent projects, have been innovative and resulted in positive road safety benefits.

For the first time the Motor Accident Commission have provided \$100 million for road safety infrastructure initiatives. This is one of the largest investments in road safety infrastructure in this State. \$52 million has already been allocated to seven important road safety projects.

One of the projects currently underway as part of this funding is the \$3.2 million upgrade of the Britannia intersection which is currently the worst unsignalised intersection in South Australia. Between 2007 and 2011 a total of 289 crashes were reported at this location, including 51 casualty crashes. An innovative design will see the existing complex five leg roundabout split into two roundabouts. The improvements will reduce total crashes by up to 29% and reduce casualty crashes by up to 23%.

Later in the Conference you will learn about an innovative project that is a world first. South Australia is trialling a wire rope barrier featuring new “smart” technology which can detect when a vehicle has crashed into it and alert traffic management. Wire rope barriers are installed along many of the State major roads to prevent vehicles from crossing into oncoming traffic. The rope will detect when a vehicle has crashed into it, triggering an electronic alert to be sent to the Traffic Management Centre. This technology has the potential to save lives. By knowing when a vehicle has hit the barrier, the centre can immediately alert emergency services.

The new technology also allows monitoring of the wire rope to ensure the wires are tensioned correctly. The technology concept was developed by the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) Electrical Assets Section and was brought into reality in conjunction with VIPAC Engineers and Scientists.

Also an Australian first, motorcycle safety in the Adelaide Hills has been improved through the installation of BASYC mesh barriers. South Australia is the first Australian State to use the BASYC Protection System used in several cities in Spain and it has been installed along a 2km section of Gorge Road, a notorious stretch of winding bitumen in the Adelaide Hills.

This section now features roadside barriers fitted with the BASYC Protection System, which sees a flexible mesh absorb energy in an impact, and covers exposed posts and gaps.

The road was identified as an accident blackspot after six crashes (five involving motorcyclists) occurred there between 2004 and 2008, resulting in three fatalities and two serious injuries.

Since the installation there have been no fatalities recorded.

There is also a lot of talk in the community and the media around the issue of speed and speed limits.

As many of you here today would know, there is overwhelming evidence across the world that lower travel speeds reduce road trauma. I have currently asked the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure to undertake a review of council and arterial roads currently posted at 110 km/h. The review will consider the merits of applying the default speed limit of 100 km/h on these roads. In undertaking this review, it acknowledges the concerns and myths that have been raised in relation to reducing speed limits; namely increased travel time, fatigue due to slower travel speed and a focus away from road maintenance and infrastructure investment. It is estimated that reducing the speed limit from 110 km/h to 100 km/h on council and state arterial roads could save over 100 casualty crashes over five years.

While South Australia is only a small State, we have shown that we punch above our weight and introduce road safety reforms that are innovative and go beyond the traditional approaches.

It is also interesting to reflect on the recent announcement that Guidebook publisher Lonely Planet has named Adelaide as one of the world's top 10 cities to visit. The only Australian city to be listed, Adelaide was named alongside Zurich, Paris, Shanghai and Vancouver in Lonely Planet's best in travel 2014 publication. Lauded as the 'perfect host city', Adelaide was recognised for its festivals and highlights the refurbishment of Adelaide Oval and the diversity of the city's eating precincts including the revitalised Leigh, Gouger and Rundle Streets.

In addition, Adelaide is one of only 18 cities featured as one of the world's most liveable cities.

Improving road safety only adds to the "liveability" of our State.

The conference program over the next two days provides an ideal opportunity for you as researchers, policy makers, communications experts and law enforcers to engage with current research and practices in order to reflect and explore how road safety can be enhanced. I am sure that you will find the keynote speakers stimulating and the panel discussion on how the media portrays road safety will be enlightening and informative.

As Police Minister I am required to attend a national meeting of all Police Ministers so I extend my apologies on not being able to participate further at this conference.

Thank you for participating today. South Australia looks forward to continued collaboration to ensure that road trauma continues to reduce and the messages we provide to the community are responsive and effective.

Enjoy your time in Adelaide and I have great pleasure in declaring the Australasian College of Road Safety National Conference open.