

21-3-2021

Ms Gabby O'Neill

Head of the Office of Road Safety

Assistant Secretary | Office of Road Safety | Surface Transport Policy Division

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications



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Dear Ms O'Neill

- Re: National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30 (Consultation Draft February 2021)
- A New National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 (Report on Consultation with stakeholders on policy priorities August 2020)

Thank you for forwarding both these documents to the Australasian Trauma Society for comment.

We note that the 11 original priorities in the "consultation" document have become 9 priorities in the "draft" consultation NRSS 2021-30 document. Motorcyclists are now part of "vulnerable" road users. "Better post-crash care" has also been omitted, which is disappointing as this priority is a recognised component of the "Safe system" approach.

We support the 9 priorities which include the established components of the Safe System approach – safe roads, safe vehicles, safe road use and speed management. However, there remains a lack of clarity as to how the National Road Safety Action Plan will ensure implementation of strategies to reduce both road fatalities and serious injuries.

It is of concern to all Australians that the NRSS 2011-20 did not manage to achieve even the modest targeted 30% reduction in road fatalities. Indeed, there were 9% excess deaths over the target period resulting in approximately 1121 deaths by mid-2020.

We are uncertain why the NRSS 2021- 2030 includes a target 50% reduction in road fatalities but only a 30% reduction in serious injuries (as opposed to a 50% reduction). While we agree that data collection on serious injuries is problematic, we note the Binational Trauma Registry provides good information on the number of serious injuries admitted to 24 Major Trauma Services (MTS) in Australia. Paralleling increases in deaths, the number of people seriously injured as a result of road trauma and admitted to these MTS *increased* over the 12 months from 2017-18 to 2018-19: in 2017-18, 45% of 8454 (3804) seriously injured admitted patients were due to transport related trauma, rising to 45% of



8528 (3838) in 2018-2019. Serious injury is therefore just as measurable an indicator as death, and should logically be subject to similar targeted reductions.

We agree that the key performance indicators (KPIs) for progress are very important to drive the overall strategy. However, it is unclear what other KPIs would be measured in addition to numbers of annual road fatalities and seriously injured people.

We support the overarching guiding principles for the next decade: zero deaths and serious injuries by 2050 utilising the Safe System approach, an evidence-based approach, clear governance arrangements, regular publication of progress in safety performance indicators enabled by a National Data Hub, the formation of an external advisory group to monitor progress, and a shared responsibility to do what it takes to reach the goals of the strategy.

The ATS and others have pointed out, in previous consultation opportunities, the challenge for the Commonwealth Government is to provide leadership in the implementation of the changes necessary to address the current epidemic of road trauma which results in an inordinate amount of pain, suffering and economic hardship to the individuals, their families and the nation. The tragedy is made worse by the fact that most road deaths and serious injuries are preventable.

We strongly support the establishment of a National Data Hub within the Office of Road Safety (ORS) and the opportunity this will provide in order to drive change and innovation for road trauma mitigation.

We agree there should be a peer selected advisory body linked to the ORS with members drawn from the various interested professional colleges and societies. Such a body will be able to assist with policy development and report bi-annually on the successful implementation of strategies to meet the current and long term aims of the NRSS.

We have also previously suggested that the ORS report directly to the Federal Minister for Road Safety, who could report directly to a Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Trauma regarding the progress of the NRSS in achieving the stated aims.

If there is to be a successful outcome to the current NRSS 2021-30, the Commonwealth Government will be required to show strong leadership in order to address the changes needed across Federal, State and Territory, and local Council jurisdictions.

While the Federal Government does not legislate or provide enforcement for road safety on State and Territory roads, it does have financial leverage in terms of the provision of significant funds for road construction. This should be linked to the appropriate development of all aspects of the Safe System by the States and Territories, such as appropriate uniform licensing of drivers, vehicle registration and speed control.

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We understand that the Australian federal system of government results in some difficulty in the interaction between the Commonwealth Government and the States and Territories, but the national road toll is a problem for all Australians and will require a co-operative effort by all parties (Commonwealth, State and Territory and local Government) to bring about change in a measured and incremental way.

The Australasian Trauma Society is generally supportive of the current Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30. However, we have some concerns regarding the lack of a clear governance structure necessary for the oversight and implementation of the changes required to ensure the success of the NRSS 2021-30. Strong oversight will be essential in achieving a significant decrease in the national road trauma fatalities and serious injuries by 2030, and towards zero by 2050.

There is now an opportunity to intervene to stop the unnecessary loss of life and serious injuries that are still occurring on the nation's roads. This will require political will and cooperation across all the relevant jurisdictions.

We would welcome the opportunity to have input into the further development of the NRSS 2021-30

Yours sincerely,

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Dr Anthony Joseph
ATS representative for the NRSS 2021-30

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of Prof Michael Reade.

Prof Michael Reade
President ATS