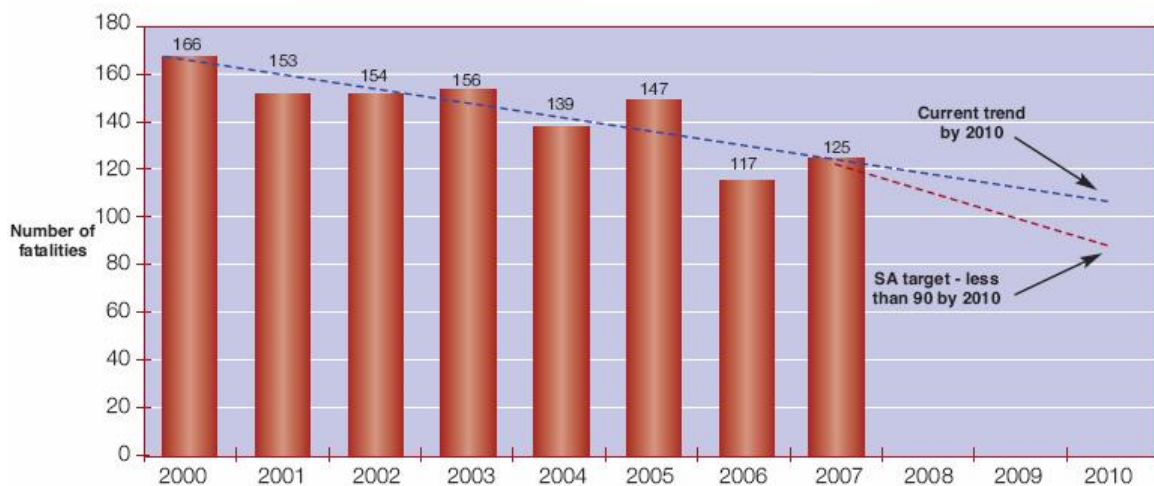


Policing Rural Highway in South Australia
 Ross Rhodes
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Since the early 1970's when there were nearly 400 persons killed and more than 4000 people seriously injured on South Australian roads, there has been a substantial decline in the number of casualties. This has occurred despite an increase in the population and vehicles. The National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010 set the target of a 40% reduction in road fatalities by the end of 2010.

In 2007 61% of all fatalities and 42.5% of serious injuries occurred on rural roads. In May 2006 SAPOL launched the South Australia Police Road Safety Strategy 2006-2010 which aims to increase the safety of all road users by dramatically reducing death and injury on SA roads. The challenge by 2010 is to reduce road fatalities to less than 90 persons per year and serious injuries to less than 1000 per year.

South Australian fatalities due to road crashes 2000-2010



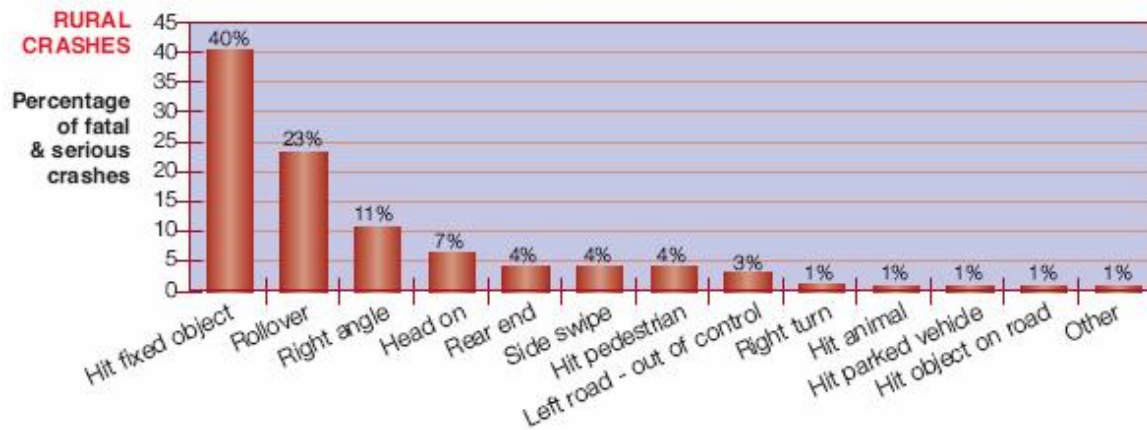
The Rural Highways Saturation Management Plan (RHSMP) was initiated in response to concerns regarding over representation of casualty crash rates in rural areas. The deterrent impact of police presence is recognised as a valuable catalyst to encourage compliant road use by drivers. To contribute a reduction in road trauma on rural highways, a strategy was developed to increase the potential for visible police presence aimed to deter risk taking behaviour and so assist in reducing the prevalence of road crashes.

The aim of the RHSMP is to reduce road trauma on selected rural highways. Those roads targeted comprise transport routes to regional centres and include major interstate transport highways. A primary objective is to deliver additional police patrol hours to enhance police visibility on the target highways.

An analysis of traffic intelligence including total fatal and casualty crashes determined appropriate patrol times to coincide with periods of higher potential for crash risk.

Strategic responses by police are assisted by an appreciation of data illustrated in The South Australian Road Safety Strategy 2003-2010 and the South Australian Road Safety Action Plan 2008-2010.

- More than two thirds of country fatalities occur on straight sections of road
- More than 70% of crashes on open rural roads are rollovers or vehicle left road crashes
- 40% of fatal and serious injury crashes occur when vehicles run off road and hit fixed objects



- 31% of fatal crashes and 18% of serious injury crashes occur on roads with a speed limit of 110 km/h
- Males comprise 75% of those killed and 62% seriously injured
- Rural residents represent 67% of the drivers or riders killed or seriously injured in rural areas
- Vehicle speed affects both the risk of a crash occurring and the severity of any resultant injuries
- Excessive speed has been identified as a major factor in at least 20% of fatal crashes

Visible police presence increases road user perceptions that inappropriate road use behaviour may incur a risk of police intervention and subsequent accountability. Safer driving outcomes are anticipated by increasing police patrol hours on target highways. The RHSMP is aimed to supplement existing patrol capacity by provision of additional hours to enforcement practitioners, or by supplementing local police presence by the influx of support resources.

RHSMP supplementation is also scheduled to coincide with holiday periods including the Christmas and New Year holiday period, long weekend public holidays and similar occasions. These periods result in higher traffic volumes in selected rural areas with a resultant increased crash risk.

The RHSMP has been funded on an ongoing basis. The primary objective of the funding is to facilitate supplementation of additional patrol hours on rural highways to maximise visible police presence.

