

# ACRS Submission

## Foundations for a Stronger Tomorrow

### WA State Infrastructure Strategy Draft



#### ***About the Australasian College of Road Safety***

The Australasian College of Road Safety was established in 1988 and is the region's peak organisation for road safety professionals and members of the public who are focused on saving lives and serious injuries on our roads.

The College Patron is His Excellency General the Honourable David John Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACRS response to the Consultation Draft .....</b>	<b>3</b>
a) Transport sector draft recommendations .....	3
b) Cross-cutting themes .....	4
c) What's missing from the draft recommendations .....	4
d) Achievability and barriers to implementation .....	5
e) Timeframes .....	6
f) Other .....	6
<b>Conclusion and ACRS Recommendations .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>7</b>

## Introduction

The Australasian College of Road Safety 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. Our objectives include the promotion of a collegiate climate amongst all those with responsibilities for and working in road safety; the improvement of relative safety outcomes for vulnerable demographic and user groups within the community; the promotion of post-crash policies and practices; the promotion of road safety as a critical organisational objective within government, business and the community; and the promotion and advocacy of policies and practices that support harm elimination.

ACRS welcomes the Foundations for a Stronger Tomorrow draft Infrastructure Strategy for WA, and the opportunity to comment. Infrastructure including the movement of people and freight has huge potential to contribute to recovery from the COVID-10 pandemic. However, such economic recovery must prioritise safety. The unacceptability of fatal and serious injuries means that safety and health are more important outcomes of the road traffic system than efficiency or cost. The critical limit beyond which human survival and recovery are not possible must be recognised as being the most important consideration in the system design.

## ACRS response to the Consultation Draft

### a) Transport sector draft recommendations

It is encouraging that road safety is mentioned in the draft Strategy, including the Western Australian target for reductions of 50% in the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads by 2030.

Recommendations such as implementing the state Road Safety Strategy appear to reinforce a commitment to road safety. However, the Road Safety Strategy itself is irresolute, inappropriate terminology such as 'accident' is used, and a failure to incorporate road safety into priority areas such as Aboriginal people and communities falls short of communicating a genuine commitment.

Road safety should be a priority; however, it is reduced to mentions via single sentences or last in lists of priorities, with congestion often being the first mention. The Infrastructure Strategy would be stronger if a systems approach was used as the framework and road safety was considered in the various classifications for recommendations, such as planning, not just transport. Further, efforts during 2021 to 2030 should be aimed at delivering the state objective of zero serious road trauma by 2050, not just the 2030 target.

The draft Strategy includes multiple instances of inappropriate terminology which are incompatible with the objective of zero serious road trauma by 2050. On p184 references "the WA road toll". A "toll" suggests a necessary cost of using the roads. The vision of zero means any death is an unacceptable price to pay. Similarly, on p85, "accidents on regional roads" is referenced. The term 'accident' is outdated and suggests something unexpected and not preventable (1)- it does not recognise the range of potential causes,(2) and is not viewed as seriously as 'crash' or 'collision'.(3)

If road safety is a serious and primary consideration, it should be specifically included in transport projects, with a clear indication of the impact a project will have in terms of the reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on the project has been completed. Quantifying this in human terms, not just microeconomic cost value is important in ensuring that the safety impacts are given due consideration with specialist expert analysis from road safety professionals working in collaboration with technical road design specialists.

### **b) Cross-cutting themes**

Throughout the cross-cutting themes, mentions of road safety appear perfunctory. The Strategy would be improved if road safety was more distinguished through providing tangible direction via the integration and importance of road safety in relation to:

- modal shift and micro-mobility options in relation to road safety which facilitate reducing congestion and enable more people to choose active transport options;
- changes in technology, not only increasing automation of vehicles, but also data collection and analysis to better inform decision making regarding safety of the transport network;
- environmental issues such as modal shift and lower speeds reducing vehicle emissions, and planning for fewer roads for motor vehicles and providing better infrastructure to encourage active transport leading to better health outcomes;
- opportunities to reduce disadvantage for Indigenous communities and the over-representation of Indigenous people in road trauma statistics and the justice system, reducing the need for investment in treatment and incarceration infrastructure; and
- identification that the metropolitan road infrastructure has the greatest level of serious injury burden for the state [it is noted that fatalities are more likely rural and remote] and what action should be taken or is being taken to reduce this burden.

The draft infrastructure Strategy does not make many of the linkages that exist between road safety and road trauma, and many state planning and infrastructure issues. For example, planning new land developments should be done using a systems approach.

### **c) What's missing from the draft recommendations**

Identification of road safety as a public health issue, and infrastructure planning with a road safety Safe System approach should be more evident within the Strategy. Such an approach would enable a more cross-government agency and holistic community approach for reducing trauma within the transport system. The draft Strategy could be more ambitious and enable better cross government effort rather than a fragmented approach. Road safety is directly relevant to transport, land planning including new developments, health, community and liveability, and new technology influencing the way we move, shop, exercise and communicate.

The depth and breadth of the Strategy's content leaves some questions to be answered, which may be better explained in an implementation plan; however, clarity regarding commitments to the following for road safety would be advantageous:

- improving the overall standard of the road network, such as shoulder widening and sealing, audible edge and centre lines, safety barriers, wide centre lines and enabling implementation of an intuitive / self-explaining transport network (rather than standards with a 'injury tolerance level');
- segregation of modes of transport, particularly vulnerable road users, for example moving away from motor vehicle centric planning and delivery for the transport network to one which provides safe infrastructure like protected motorcycle, pedal cycles and micro-mobility lanes instead of motor vehicle carriageways;
- identification and effort for the safety of vulnerable road users including people with disabilities, children, pedestrians, the aged, cyclists, micro-mobility users and motorcycles;
- greater clarity regarding the transition phase for the uptake, support and safe operation of automated vehicles and improving the uptake of vehicles with safety features due to the level of support provided to such vehicles by the infrastructure;
- establishing or improving capacity and capability of the overall infrastructure, land development and transport network, design, development and use (for example land planning decisions and residential area designs, decisions regarding heavy vehicle routes and freight networks);
- incorporation of commitments and objectives of the National Infrastructure Strategy and National Road Safety Strategy.

Whilst implementation of the State Road Safety Strategy is noted, that Strategy itself does not provide tangible initiatives or a level of detail or governance that could reasonably underpin the Strategy for infrastructure. Further, there is no recognition of the economic disbenefits of road trauma or benefits of reducing road trauma. A cost to government in 2015 was reported of more than \$3.7 billion resulting from road trauma. This cost included "*immediate responses to road trauma in health, emergency services and other areas incur \$945 million of this cost in the first year after a crash*";<sup>(4)</sup> highlighting that road safety is not an issue to be considered in isolation. The Western Australian draft Infrastructure Strategy should consider inclusion of governance and performance in its Triple Bottom Line, or an equivalent model.

#### **d) Achievability and barriers to implementation**

The opportunity of using the avoidance of serious injury and saving lives is not leveraged. The apparent understatement regarding the benefits of improving road safety misses the opportunity to motivate the community and improve understanding of infrastructure related issues such as reducing travel speeds. A lack of focus results in a lack of action.

There is little or no information regarding the evidence base used regarding programmes identified. The Strategy would be more robust and provide agencies with a better understanding of decisions regarding priorities and accountability requirements if evidence was provided such as baselines or what data was used to determine action. Examples include impetus for congestion reduction initiatives in relation to road safety, including improving availability and safety of infrastructure for active modes of transport.

### e) Timeframes

Given the nature of the Strategy, the overall time period of the Strategy is short. For example, roads built today will be used for decades or centuries. The road trauma tolerance built into the system during the next ten years will be inherited long after the end of the draft Strategy's timeframe. The Strategy appears more 'business as usual' rather than taking a strategic step for generations to come.

### f) Other

The headline statement relating to road safety on page 185 should be replaced with a more holistic statement that engages all members of the community. The current statement provides an unbalanced view of the road trauma issue within Western Australia.

## Conclusion and ACRS Recommendations

The ACRS welcomes the draft Strategy, and the recognition of road safety within it. However, the approach taken with road safety and the single recommendation made that is specific to road safety misses the opportunity to identify and reinforce the integrated nature of road safety. ACRS recommends:

- Road safety should be identified in relation to state planning, health and wellbeing, improving performance in relation to environmental issues, reducing congestion through modal shifts, the economic issues associated with reducing road trauma or maintaining the current cost of such, and liveability
- The Strategy should be refocused using a systems approach
- All transport projects should be required to describe their effects on road safety in term of the number of people killed and seriously injured (not only as a microeconomic cost value in dollars).

The ACRS appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft Infrastructure Strategy and contribute to improved road safety in Western Australia. Please contact us if you require any further information.



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## References

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