

Coverage of conference proceedings in SafetyLit

SafetyLit has always tried to include abstracts of the complete conference proceedings for international traffic safety-related organisations. Often, this is an important source for information because many important presentations never end up as articles in scholarly journals. Currently, SafetyLit is the only source (free or subscription-based) of the entire AAAM proceedings with author abstracts. By the end of March we should have the complete Stapp and IRCOBI proceedings. Again, although several databases contain some of the proceedings (and those that do contain them have serious errors with the authors and missing page numbers), no other database

has the complete proceedings. By the end of April we should have the complete proceedings of the International Council on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety.

I found several years of the Australian Road Safety Research, Education and Policing conferences online and will begin adding them. I noticed that the US Transportation Research Board's TRID database has some but not all of these conference abstracts online. We will begin adding full proceedings with author abstracts from these conferences. If you or your readers have suggestions for other conference proceedings that we should add, please contact me at david.lawrence@sdsu.edu and I will try to include them.

ACRS comments on the Draft National Road Safety Strategy

The ACRS has made a formal submission to the Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020. Although the ACRS welcomes the proposed Safe System approach and the inclusion of serious injuries in its target, the submission also makes a number of criticisms of the draft.

Excerpts from the ACRS submission follow, including introductory remarks, some positives of the Draft, limited attention to linkages and synergies, and the executive summary. The full ACRS submission to the Draft National Strategy is at <http://www.acrs.org.au/srcfiles/ACRS-submission-to-NRSC-Feb-2011.pdf>

Introduction

The Australasian College of Road Safety (ACRS) is an independent body for those working in or interested in road safety. Members include engineers, epidemiologists, road trauma specialists, researchers, driver trainers, enforcement agencies, psychologists, policy makers, industry representatives, motoring associations, insurance companies and many others who have a stake in road safety.

ACRS offers the following comments on the Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (the Draft).

ACRS has for many years recommended improvements in national road safety. Its *2004 Yearbook*, with expert views on what should be done in the next seven years to achieve the target of reducing the national road toll, included measures discussed in the Draft, e.g., inclusion of injuries as an indicator and the issue of speed. In 2009-2010 in the lead up to the production of the Draft, ACRS ran seminars [1] and focused on the upcoming strategy in its quarterly journal, using the comments of several of the most eminent road safety practitioners and researchers in Australia.

ACRS therefore welcomes the opportunity for formal consultation in relation to the Draft. ACRS was grateful for the lengthy telephone conversation with those responsible for the Draft on 20 January 2011. The comments here are based in part on the information contained in the Draft itself and also on

the conversation that took place.

Some positives of the Draft

ACRS commends the Draft for the inclusion of serious injuries in the overall casualty reduction target (page 12), as the issue was given very little attention in the previous strategy. The definition of the injuries and specific reduction targets, whether to vehicle passengers or other road users, should be specified. ACRS also commends the Safe System as the organising framework for the Draft and the development of the program around its principles (pages 11-12).

As an advocate of evidence-based action, ACRS considers that the 'Research and Modelling' section of the Draft is vital, but inclusion of the material in this section rather than its production on request of limited data for public analysis would have been preferable to enable a more thorough examination than has been possible in the timeframe available to ACRS. Additionally, more information about the selection of the policy scenarios put forward, particularly in relation to others that might have been considered but were discarded, would add credibility.

The Draft's recognition (page 9) that drivers make mistakes and that greater emphasis should be placed on initiatives that improve the inherent safety of the road safety system (that the introduction of seat belts, ESC, traffic lights, roundabouts, etc., do – that is, engineer the driver out of the system) is welcomed. Also welcome is the recognition (page 13) of system managers' roles, i.e., a primary responsibility to provide a safe operating environment. These two statements are not, however, examined to explore possible remediation mechanisms for system managers who fail to provide a safe operating system, just as drivers are often penalised when they fail.

Limited attention to linkages and synergies

The most common expression of dissatisfaction with the Draft by members was in relation to the limited attention given by the Draft to linkages and synergies (p 13). The EU

communication *Towards a European road safety area: Policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020* [2] refers to road safety having close links with policies on energy, environment, employment, education, youth, public health, research, innovation and technology, justice, insurance, trade and foreign affairs – a long list. It also refers to the concept of shared responsibility, which is picked up in the Draft, but the former concept is not expanded on.

To use members' words: "What is disappointing is that the strategy is not contextualised within the broader framework of health, environment and sustainability. While these things are briefly alluded to, the allusion is to 'synergies' rather than critical determining factors. There is no development of the relationship between modal split, health, environment and sustainability – e.g., the idea that public transport can be a road safety countermeasure. In this sense this strategy is a lost opportunity to think outside the box and to be visionary about what road safety is likely to mean in the decades to come. It is disappointing that the really strategic aspects of national policy (as distinct from the more tactical elements) have received scant recognition in the draft. Little more than lip-service is given to the concepts of intersectoral coordination and subsequent synergistic benefits to other agency programs, or of the opportunity cost to other national programs represented by the cost of the road toll."

The College recognizes that the new strategy must be reformist in nature and will require change in many areas. Niccolo Machiavelli captured resistance to change in his famous quote: "There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all who profit by the new order."

While the Draft signals early on (Foreword second paragraph) that bold steps will be needed and that "the time is ripe for a fresh approach" (page 5) to reduce further the number of deaths and serious injuries in Australia, our analysis below suggests that it may have fallen short of its own ambitions. ACRS is a strong advocate for, not an enemy of, the necessary reform.

Executive summary

ACRS welcomes the Draft's Safe System approach and the inclusion of serious injuries in its target. However,

- the Draft lacks an integrated approach to road safety
- the Draft lacks an international context
- the Draft has a target which is not ambitious enough
- the Draft fails to take the opportunity to strengthen data capture and research
- the Draft fails to include cost-effectiveness as a "guiding principle" of the strategy and
- the Draft is not persuasive in relation to implementation and accountability. The case for the interventions chosen in the Draft for priority implementation (sections 7 to 10) is not fully persuasive and the plan for implementation is not robust.

- A combination of the above points in relation to target and international context could lead to the inclusion of an aim or vision for Australia to be at least in the top 10 OECD countries for road safety performance before the end of the decade of the strategy.
- An overarching communication strategy is needed to support all the facets of the National Road Safety Strategy and a clear acknowledgment within the strategy that communication with key stakeholders, such as the media, is vital.
- The Draft lacks urgency and specificity to implement action. It should include performance-based outcomes (i.e., concrete proposals of what is to be achieved) - e.g., no one who is impaired by drink driving will be able to drive a car by 2020; no car less than ANCAP-rated 4 stars will be sold by 2015; no new major road will be less than AusRAP 4 stars by 2015. Technologies which are available now should be utilized immediately rather than leaving them as future steps, e.g., increasing traffic surveillance to improve detection of unregistered vehicles and unlicensed drivers (Draft page 51). Generic targets should be removed as being too easy to achieve. The action steps need to be revisited, and where action is already underway on the first steps, additional steps should be re-prioritized as first steps to assist the rate of improvement. Specific technology should not be mandated, but encouraged through market mechanisms, as it may change during the lifetime of the strategy.
- The Draft lacks any program to improve the skills and competence of all the various professionals and practitioners involved in the many areas on road safety to develop the concept of the Safe System, not only drivers.

References

1. Camkin H. It's crunch-time for a new national road safety strategy – Report on a seminar by the Australasian College of Road Safety NSW (Sydney) Chapter. *Journal of the Australasian College of Road Safety* 2010; 21(1). Available at <http://www.acrs.org.au/srcfiles/ACRS-Journal-21-1-Web1.pdf>
2. European Commission. *Towards a European road safety area: Policy orientations on road safety 2011-2020*. Brussels: EC, 2010. http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/pdf/com_20072010_en.pdf

Note from the Managing Editor:

Future issues of the journal will have themes as follows:

Volume 22 No. 2, 2011 - Road safety in Asia

*Volume 22 No. 3, 2011 - Heavy vehicle safety
(a special issue with guest editor Lori Mooren)*

*Volume 22 No. 4, 2011 - Media, advertising and road
safety messages (a special feature with guest editor
Dr Ioni Lewis, CARRS-Q)*

Members are invited to contribute articles related to these themes or on road safety more generally. Contact the Managing Editor (journaleditor@acrs.org.au) with respect to deadlines for receipt of articles.