

Contributed Articles

ANCAP – Ensuring Safer Cars

Article contributed by



The AAA Board pictured in the photo:

(L-R): Ted Best (Pres, RACT); John Fotheringham (CEO, RAA); Ron Gray (Pres, AAA); Julie-Anne Schafer (Pres, RACQ); Michael Tynan (V-P, NRMA); Tony Stuart (CEO, NRMA), Clive Hall (Pres, RACV); Lauchlan McIntosh (CEO, AAA); Alan Terry (CEO, RACQ); David Booth (Pres, AANT); Terry Agnew (CEO, RAC); Colin Jordan (CEO, RACV); Greg Goodman (CEO, RACT); Juliet Brown (Pres, RAA); Brian Gibbons (CEO, NZAA); Freda Crucitti (Pres, RAC); Alan Evans (Pres NRMA, V-P AAA).

The advances in vehicle safety and design were dramatically illustrated to the AAA Board at the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority's Crashlab, which was the venue for the March 2006 meeting. The Crashlab is a new, purpose-built facility by the NSW Government to undertake a range of vehicle and other tests – including car crash tests for the Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) partially sponsored by Australia's motoring organisation.

Board members saw the graphic results of a head-on collision between a 2005 Holden Astra and its 1989 model – both traveling at 60km/h.

Crashlab manager, Ross dal Nevo highlighted the advances in occupant protection in the last decade or so and the accompanying photograph proves. "Occupants of the 2005 Astra had an injury rating which was unlikely to lead to permanent brain damage or death," Mr dal Nevo said. "The

driver and passenger of the 1989 Astra had injury ratings which almost certainly would have meant a double fatality for the occupants of the older car. ”

The AAA Board also witnessed the crash testing of a Mitsubishi Magna 380 at 60km/h, with a “family” of four inside including two “young” crash test dummies in child restraints. Preparations for the test are painstaking. It takes hours to simulate the split-second that all drivers dread. Computerised equipment is placed in the boot, attached to sensors and other tracking monitors on the car and the crash test dummies. The crash test dummies – each worth about \$250,000 believe it or not – are placed in the car, taped into place where necessary (eg: hands on steering wheel) and attached to the tracking equipment. The vehicle is not driven but is pulled into the crash by a high-tech towing system. The engine remains off to ensure the focus is on the impact of the crash test – other tests involving fire safety are also conducted at the Crashlab.

The Magna was towed along a runway of about 100m before it impacted head-on with a “honeycomb” barrier designed to simulate the front section of another car. The barrier was situated on the right front side of the Magna. The crash “site” is surrounded by a bank of floodlights and cameras to record the impact from different angles and complements the information picked up by the sensors and tracking equipment. Results from the test are collated and analysed under the ANCAP protocols, with vehicles receiving a star rating based upon performance.

The Crashlab tests around 10 vehicles a year through ANCAP. In addition, it also conducts tests on bus and ferry seating, child restraints and vertical (drop) testing for safety equipment. Chairman of ANCAP, Lauchlan McIntosh, said the Crashlab tests are a major plank in the SaferRoads project established by the AAA and Constituents, along with partners including the Australasian College of Road Safety, the Australian Trucking Association and the Australian Local Government Association.

“The SaferRoads’ philosophy is *safer* drivers in *safer* cars on *safer* roads,” Mr McIntosh said. “ANCAP is about safer cars and has raised the bar on vehicle safety. The ANCAP program has pressured manufacturers to ensure Australian motorists, their families and passengers are protected by the best safety equipment and protection available. “Just looking at the crash test between the two Holden Astras clearly shows the advances made in vehicle design and manufacture. “It is programs like ANCAP and the Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP), which are both major elements of SaferRoads, that highlight road safety to motorists, governments and all stakeholders.

“AusRAP will shortly be announcing its first star ratings of Australia’s national highway links in the same way that ANCAP rates these cars – it will give a clear indication of the safe and unsafe roads. “It is only through programs like these, that sit under the SaferRoads umbrella, that we can pressure governments, manufacturers and industry to ensure Australians can travel around the country by road without having to pay dearly for making an everyday mistake. “Five people die every day on Australian roads – that is a tragedy that can be prevented and SaferRoads is about doing that.”



A recent ANCAP offset frontal crash test of a Toyota Hilux 4x2 ute conducted at 64km/hr. The Hilux scored 4 stars in this test.