

Australia's First Star Ratings of Our National Highways

Article contributed by



To view a version of this map in colour, visit www.ausep.org

The Australian Automobile Association (AAA) – Australia's peak motoring body - released on 3rd October 2006 the first Star Ratings for Australia's AusLink non-urban national road network, which shows most national highways are not up to acceptable safety standards. The Star Ratings classify roads from 1-star (least safe) to 5-star (safest). AAA's Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) star rated some 19,000km of our national highway network, with the majority of roads rating 3 stars - not good enough according to AAA Executive Director, Lauchlan McIntosh.

Mr McIntosh said the 3-star ratings were below those expected of a national network of roads. "Our highways, which link the capital cities and freight terminals, carry millions of people and goods every day for work, business or pleasure - these national roads are the lifeblood of Australia's transport system – and a 3-star rating is simply sub-standard," he said.

The star ratings program was developed in consultation with Australia's motoring clubs, State/Territory road and traffic agencies and research organisation ARRB, using data provided by the agencies and analysed in line with international standards established through the AusRAP. The program also benefitted from a grant from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB).

The national highway audit shows that, of 18,332km analysed, 2% of the length was 2-star, 51% was 3-star and 47% was rated a 4-star road. There were no significant stretches of 5-star or 1-star roads.

Under the AusRAP star ratings, a 3-star road has deficiencies in the design elements which can raise the risk of a crash and being injured in one - these design flaws include poorly sealed road shoulders, lack of safety barriers, narrow lanes, poor alignment (bends/curves), or too many intersections and roadside hazards such as unguarded trees or poles and undivided high traffic sections.

Mr McIntosh said, "While we believe the 3-star rating is not good enough for a national highway many of the deficiencies can be fixed at relatively low cost. But it is vital for Australian road users that governments and the community realise the importance of road design in road safety. Roads are more important than you think - we all need to recognise the different risks on different parts of a road system.

"While the last Federal Budget allocated considerably more money to road construction for the AusLink network - and this was certainly welcomed by AAA - much more needs to be done to bring the entire Network up to at least 4 stars. We should expect that, with increasing traffic, we can have a national network which has low risk and hence a low crash rate.

"Five people die every day on Australian roads and 61 are seriously injured - these tragic statistics could be significantly lowered if more attention is paid to incorporating simple safety features in all road design and maintenance. Research confirms that improving roads can contribute more to reducing road

deaths than improving driver behaviour and vehicle safety. AAA and the motoring clubs strongly support the systems approach to road safety - safer drivers in safer cars on safer roads. A safe driver in a safe car should not risk serious injury or loss of life for making a simple driving error, such as a momentary lapse in concentration, because of a road with poor design elements."

The AusRAP Star Ratings Report was released by Australia's motoring clubs to highlight the condition of the AusLink National network. A National colour-coded map showing the Star Ratings for most sections of the highways in all States and Territories, except NSW (which was unable to provide AusRAP with the data), is available at www.ausrap.org.

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Simulating Police Urgent Duty Missions

The following is an abridged version of a translation of an article that appeared in the German Journal for Police and Traffic Management - Police and Safety Technology, Volume 50-July/August 2005.

By Senior Police Superintendent Jürgen Pfaffenzeller, Bavarian Police, Sulzbach-Rosenberg

Blue Light Action!

The blue light is flashing and the urgent duty siren wailing for another Urgent Duty Mission. These calls are part of daily police life - traffic accident, bank security alarm, assault, brawl or whatever. But the young police driver is sweating. His heart is beating fast! He has heard the siren on many occasions, but this is his first time sitting behind the steering wheel. This is his first Urgent Duty Mission.

There's lots of traffic around. Nonetheless he is doing 100 km/hr. through the city. Oh no! The next traffic light is on "red". And there's a long queue of vehicles waiting. What now? Pass on the left against the oncoming traffic? Traffic is heading towards us. We'll try, anyway. The driver of the red "Golf" heading towards us jams on his brakes and pulls to his right. The young police driver also. All went well. Now foot hard down once again, but seconds later it's hard on the brakes. The pedestrians have "green".

Again put your foot down. Why doesn't the guy in front pull over? Now he's even braking! Again jam on the brakes. But not enough! The police car shunts the car in front. Trouble! Switch off the engine. The young colleague is completely shattered. He gets out of the police vehicle. But he doesn't have to worry. He just steered the Urgent Duty car through a *virtual world* in the Police Urgent Duty Driving Simulator.



Fig. 1: High-End-Simulator with 6-legs movement system. En route to the destination all inertia forces are simulated.