

Australia's National Highways Rated For Safety

Article contributed by



The Australian Automobile Association has maintained its focus on the SaferRoads program with the release of the latest ratings of Australia's national road network in a bid to further highlight the state of Australia's roads.

The Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) – which rates Australia's road network – shows that many of Australia's national highways are "High risk" roads that could unnecessarily contribute to road trauma and death.

AAA Executive Director, Lauchlan McIntosh, launched the latest road ratings contained in an AusRAP report entitled *How Safe Are Our Roads – Rating Australia's Road Network for Risk*.

"Five people die every day on Australian roads and often these tragedies could have been avoided if the roads were more forgiving," Mr McIntosh said.

"All roads are not equal - some are better and safer than others. These AusRAP ratings show us where the dangerous – and the safest – sections are on our national network.

"This report highlights the state of our major road network and shows where remedial treatments should be investigated and solutions provided."

AusRAP rates the roads on the basis of collective risk and individual risk. Collective risk reports the total number of crashes on a road section (casualty crashes per kilometre), while individual risk takes into account traffic volumes (casualty crashes per vehicle kilometre travelled). The assessments are shown in a series of State-by-State colour coded risk maps.

Mr McIntosh said that the data used to develop the AusRAP ratings was drawn from the latest government data between 1999 and 2003 – this did not include results from sections improved since that time.

"For example, the Victorian Government has installed many sections of wire barriers along the Hume Highway and improvements are occurring in other states," he said.

"It shows that road authorities are aware of the need to upgrade road infrastructure, but obviously they need more funds to continue this work."

AusRAP risk maps are part of an overall program to develop an Australian ratings system for roads - similar to the European Road Assessment Program (euroRAP) - to promote information about the relative safety of different roads.

The AusRAP report sets out the "best and worst" links – all on a State by State basis, with some examples in the attached summary.

Mr McIntosh also acknowledged the support of the Australian Transport Council and the contribution of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau. "We look forward to further developing the AusRAP database to include a star rating system based on a Road Protection Score, which should be completed in 2006. This score will be based on the inherent safety features and hazards along the road network," he said.

"Road safety results in Australia require recognition by everyone in the community that we need safer drivers in safer cars on safer roads. AusRAP helps us all understand the relative safety of different roads and the potential to save lives by improvement. According to research, improving roads can make the biggest contribution to reducing death and injuries on our roads. Roads are far more important than most people realise."

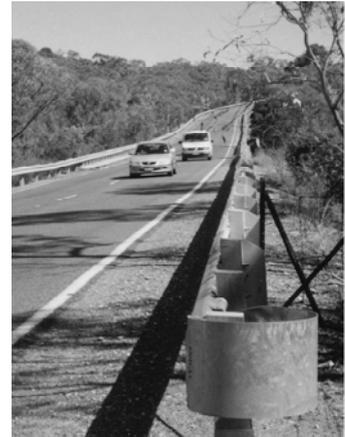
The AusRAP report can be viewed on the AusRAP website www.ausrap.org and the AAA website www.aaa.asn.au

Following is a State by State "snapshot" of the major road ratings.

AusRAP - State By State "Snapshot"

Some of the AusRAP results include:

- NSW*
 - Pacific Highway (618km) average 44 deaths per year and has a high collective risk rating.
 - Many sections of the Sturt and Newell Highways are regarded as having a low risk rating in terms of safety.
- Vic*
 - Calder Highway (486km) relatively unsafe, nearly all sections have a medium to high individual risk rating.
 - The Sturt Highway (226km) is relatively safe, with low-medium collective and low individual risk.
- Qld*
 - The Bruce Highway (1553km) averages 41 deaths per year and is relatively unsafe – medium or above individual risk rating.
 - There are no roads in Queensland that can be classified as "best". Many major sections are classified as medium-high to high in collective and individual risk categories.



An Australian Capital Territory road soon to be upgraded to dual carriageways.

- SA
- Sturt Highway (226km) relatively unsafe and rated medium or above for both individual and collective risk.
 - The Eyre Highway, from the WA border to Yalata, is rated as having low collective risk and low-medium individual risk.
- WA
- Great Northern/Victoria Highway (3188km) very low traffic volumes and relatively unsafe, with a medium-high to high individual risk.
- NT:
- Many sections of the Great Eastern/Coolgardie-Esperance/Eyre Highway are rated low in both collective and individual risk.
 - Stuart Highway (1749km) safety performance varies but relatively unsafe, with individual risk rating medium-high to high.

Motorcycle Safety

By Ian Faulks, STAYSAFE Committee, NSW Parliament and Liz de Rome, LDR Consulting

Motorcycle deaths in New South Wales have risen sharply in 2005, with 31 motorcyclists dying in road crashes in the first four months of 2005. Up to mid-September 2005, another 15 motorcyclists have died. These deaths are those reported as occurring on 'roads or road-related areas'—a required element for a motor vehicle-related death in New South Wales to be recorded under the formal definition of road trauma. There are a number of additional deaths involving motorcyclists that occurred in areas not considered to be roads or road-related areas.

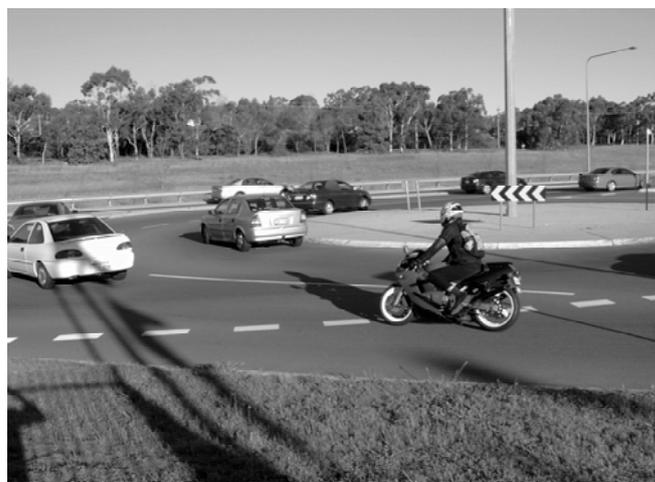
The rapid rise in motorcycle deaths is a matter of concern. Recent fatal motorcycle crashes involved:

- A majority of male riders
- Wide range of ages (15 year old pillion passenger to 84 year old rider)
- Crashes occurred across a wide range of areas of New South Wales (Sydney, Wollongong, North Coast, New England)
- Most crashes were on local and minor roads
- Crashes involved impacts with other motor vehicles and impacts with roadside objects

These observations indicate that there is not just one subgroup of riders at greater risk. It is a concern for all riders.

Despite active efforts by the NSW Motorcycle Council and the Motor Accidents Authority to develop a motorcycle safety strategy and to promote wearing of appropriate protective equipment, injuries and deaths of riders continue to increase.

The Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries has reported that retail figures for the first quarter of 2005 show that motorcycle sales in Australia continue to grow rapidly. The motorcycle market in Australia appears to be experiencing a long term revival, with the expected total 2005 market reaching 100,000 motorcycles—a total volume of sales not seen since the early 1970s. The growth in sales of new motorcycles is primarily driven by the road bike market, and includes segments such as super sports, scooters, and cruisers. Sales of off-road motorcycles also increased. A total of 21,336



road bikes, dirt bikes and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) were sold to the end of March 2005 - an increase of 13.3% over the same period last year. The increase follows a record year in 2004, when total motorcycle sales grew by 21.3% to 89,374—the highest in more than two decades.

At a meeting of the National Road Safety Strategy Panel, formed to monitor the implementation of the National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010, in February 2005 in Canberra, the issue of motorcycling safety in New South Wales was considered. It was reported that there had been a slight reduction in the number of motorcycle crashes between 1995 and 2003, despite a 34% increase in the number of registered motorcycles over the same period. Between 2000 and 2003 there was an 11% decrease in multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes. This decrease was made up of a 9% reduction in multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes in which the motorcycle rider played the major role, and a 12% reduction in such crashes where the other driver played the major role. It was noted that a motorcycle awareness campaign, funded by the Motor Accidents Authority, was introduced in 2002. It was also noted that the light truck category of vehicles (which includes 4WDs) are over-represented in motorcycle-into-car crashes.

The issue of a national motorcycle safety strategy was raised at this meeting of the National Road Safety Strategy Panel in