

# Contributed Articles

Please note that our November 2009 Journal will have a major focus on motorcycle safety. If you would like to write a 'Letter to the Editor' or submit an article, please send it as a MS Word document to [journaleditor@acrs.org.au](mailto:journaleditor@acrs.org.au) by 1st October

## Road Safety Strategies for a New Decade

*A message from the Hon Anthony Albanese MP*

*Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government*

### Towards a new National Road Safety Strategy



Australia's first National Road Safety Strategy was established by federal, state and territory Transport Ministers in 1992. Among its objectives was a reduction in the annual road fatality rate from 12 to 10 deaths per 100,000 people by the year 2001. This proved to be an unduly modest ambition, as the

target was actually reached in 1997.

A second National Road Safety Strategy, covering the 10-year period 2001 to 2010, was approved by the Australian Transport Council (ATC) in late 2000. This time the goal was more challenging: to achieve a 40 per cent reduction in the national fatality rate, to 5.6 deaths per 100,000 people, by the end of the decade.

As most readers of this journal will know, national progress over recent years has been much slower than originally projected. Yet very real gains in road safety have been made – and many lives have been saved – since the adoption of the current national strategy. Australia's road fatality rate at the end of 2008 was down to 6.9 deaths per 100,000 people, equivalent to an overall reduction of 25 per cent since the strategy commenced.

There is now widespread international recognition that a country's road safety performance is best served through the creation and implementation of a robust national strategy. This view was reinforced late last year in the landmark OECD report *Towards Zero: Ambitious Road Safety Targets and the Safe System Approach*.

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The basic role of a national strategy is to marshal support for ambitious road safety goals and to lay out a high-level course of action to achieve those goals. In Australia's federal system, where government responsibilities for road safety are shared among many jurisdictions, the National Road Safety Strategy also provides an avenue for collective commitment to major initiatives or reforms. Furthermore, it lends support to the road safety efforts of individual jurisdictions; and over time can add value to those efforts by promoting information exchange and helping to define 'best practice'.

The ATC has now initiated the development of a new National Road Safety Strategy with a 10-year horizon to 2020. The strategy will need to be ready for Ministers to approve before the end of next year, so that it can come into effect on 1 January 2011.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government is working with state and territory road transport agencies to oversee the preparation of the strategy, including arrangements for consultation with road safety stakeholder groups and the wider community. It has also commissioned the Monash University Accident Research Centre to carry out an analytical study that will underpin the content of the strategy and inform the adoption of road trauma reduction targets.

Further information about the strategy development process will be released as this work progresses. In the meantime, I would welcome the views of College members about the key directions and priorities for Australian road safety over the coming decade.