

ANCAP's Growing Role in Road Safety Promotion

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In 2007 the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) established itself as ANCAP Australasia Ltd after operating as a joint venture of motoring organisations and government agencies since 1993. ANCAP tests the relative crashworthiness of new cars, to provide comparative information for new car buyers.

The ANCAP Tests

ANCAP uses 4 internationally recognized crash tests; offset frontal, side impact, pedestrian and pole impact test in testing new car models. Crash tests are undertaken by independent specialist crash test laboratories. In all tests crash test dummies are used to facilitate the scientific measurement of the various forces in the crash test. The data gathered is then assessed, using internationally recognized protocols, and scores are determined for various parts of the crash test. Additionally, ANCAP awards bonus points for other safety features. The overall score is then translated into a star rating, between 1 to 5 stars.

ANCAP's Public Face

In 2007 with a new Board we set up a small management secretariat, a new Web site, hosted a media day, added a new member, programmed additional advertising, supported stakeholder advertising, engaged with the Federal Government and Opposition, briefed the New Zealand Minister, some State Ministers and senior officials, introduced a voluntary "Stars on Cars" program for manufacturers to advertise their crash test results in the showroom; and set a new five star standard for 2008, with Electronic Stability Control as a mandatory requirement. We were sponsors at two major road safety conferences and saw an increase in the number of manufacturers, car testers and reporters actively publishing ANCAP results. Our Web site was used widely and the latest Australia's Best Cars Awards factored ANCAP ratings into their assessment. Fleet managers have taken a greater interest in new car safety features and crash test results and some manufacturers are actively advertising the safety ratings to promote their cars to these fleet managers.

From Safety Tester to Safety Promoter

In 2007 ANCAP has moved from being a test and report operation into a more positive promoter of the successes of improved safety features in new cars. To do this we have maintained our rigor and independence, but have been able to build on the increasing recognition of the value of safer cars in the broader system approach to improving road safety outcomes, ie safer drivers in safer cars on safer roads. This system approach

to safety is commonplace in a modern workplace, but in our community we have yet to embrace it in considering how to improve our road safety performance. Perhaps road deaths from crashes, euphemistically labelled the "road toll" are a really a politically similar inconvenient truth to the concerns over climate change. The community seems to too easily accept that safety on the roads is the other drivers problem.

The National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010, agreed by all the Federal, State and Territory governments, set a target to reduce road deaths by 40% by 2010. However there were a total of 130 road deaths in October 2007, a 7.4% increase over the October 2006 figure. On an annual basis, we have achieved only about a 10% reduction in 7 years so will need to achieve a 30% reduction in 3 years to meet the target. Too many people are killed, injured or permanently disabled unnecessarily in road crashes. At present the annual economic cost is around \$18bn.

The Monash University Accident Research Centre has estimated that if everyone bought the safest car in each class (small, medium, or large) road trauma involving light passenger vehicles could be reduced by 26 per cent. This is potentially one life saved every day in Australia. If each vehicle incorporated the safest design elements for vehicles in its class, then such trauma could be reduced by 40 per cent. This is potentially two lives a day and while injury reductions are difficult to estimate, the savings may be as high as over 20 serious injuries every day. Image the reduction the workload for our trauma centres across the country, not to mention the reduction in personal suffering.

ANCAP's Future Role

So ANCAP has an important future in 2008. We have a vital role to assist the community to understand how vital it is to buy safe equipment, how important it is to be prepared to pay for the best features, to encourage the manufacturers to make these best features in every model they sell, and to do so in a non regulatory environment if at all possible.

In 2008 we will be expanding our demonstration events particularly to fleet managers, we will expand the advertising of the "stars on cars" program and we will continue to expand our relationships with manufacturers, car dealers, consumers and governments.

New technologies in car safety are accelerating into the market. A challenge for ANCAP will be to keep up with the relative value of these technologies, to assist in the promotion to consumers of these new valuable life saving technologies. We are only a small part of what is needed to ensure Australia meets its national road safety targets. As Chair of ANCAP my role will be that of a facilitator to encourage our stakeholders and our audiences to move forward such that the benefits of safety features in the new car fleet are in the highest possible demand.