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Mr Gerry McInally  
Joint Select Committee on Road Safety  
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Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

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Dear Mr McInally

Re: Submission for the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety on behalf of the Australasian Trauma Society

Thank you for your letter of 4 December 2019 inviting our Society to address issues related to the Terms of Reference of the above committee.

We acknowledge there has been some progress made in addressing the aims of the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) 2011-2020 which were to decrease the annual number of deaths and serious injuries by 30%.

Regrettably, the NRSS will not be able to achieve the above relatively modest targets by the end of 2020. According to the latest Australian Automobile Association (AAA) report for the 3 months ending 30 September 2019, the NRSS has only been able to achieve a 17 % reduction in annual deaths compared to baseline over the 9-year period to date.

According to data provided by the Australian and New Zealand Trauma Registry, the number of severe injuries for the year ending September 2019 was 0.9% higher than for the equivalent period ending September 2018 with approximately 3400 seriously injured patients admitted to the Australian Major Trauma Services. This figure has been relatively stable since 2016. The cost to society and individuals has been estimated at \$30 billion annually.

We would nonetheless like to congratulate the Federal Government on the successful implementation of a number of strategies designed to address the national road trauma deaths and serious injuries. These include the establishment of the following:

1. A Joint Select Committee on Road Safety.



2. The Office of Road Safety within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development with the aim of improving road safety leadership and coordination across government.
3. The Road Safety Awareness and Enablers' Fund and the Road Safety Innovation Fund.
4. The National Partnership Agreement on Land Transport Infrastructure Projects.
5. The investment of \$2.2 billion in the Local and State Government Road Safety Package as part of a \$100 billion investment over 10 years for transport infrastructure.

The above efforts of Federal Government are to be applauded and demonstrate a commitment on the part of the Government to address the physical, personal and economic toll from road trauma.

The Honourable Michael McCormack, the Minister for Transport, Regional Development and Regional Development, has recognised that an enhanced data and evaluation system will play a vital role in “properly tailoring initiatives, responding to new issues and ensuring the next strategy achieves its objective”.

We have the following suggestions for the Terms of Reference of the Joint Select Committee based on the 4 key issues of the Safe System: safe roads, safe cars, safe drivers and safe speeds.

- a. *the effectiveness of existing road safety support services and programs, including opportunities to integrate Safe System principles into health, education, industry and transport policy*

Although there are existing services and programs, there is no unified oversight of the NRSS from a national perspective. We understand that the Office of Road Safety has the aim of “improving road safety leadership and coordination across government”, but it is unclear how this will be achieved. The national road safety data should be robust, accurate and timely, and this will drive policy decisions which should be coordinated across all levels of government. Funding could be linked to the achievement of agreed KPIs. Moreover, there should be an overarching body of representatives from the relevant colleges and societies which could meet quarterly to review the progress in achieving the agreed road safety targets of the Office of Road Safety.

- b. *the impact of road trauma on the nation, including the importance of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries in remote and regional areas*



The benefit of aiming for zero deaths and serious injuries is obvious from both a personal and an economic point of view. The main aim of the Safe System for road safety is to build safety features into the road environment, so that when humans make mistakes, there is enough flexibility in the system to mitigate against serious injury or death. The risk of serious injury and death is higher on a per capita basis in rural areas and consequently these regions warrant even greater attention than is due to urban areas in terms of improved access to safer car designs, safer speed limits, separation of vulnerable road users from traffic, encouraging the use of public transport and building more effective public transport systems for both short and long trips.

- c. *the possible establishment of a future parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Safety and its functions*

The Australasian Trauma Society would support this concept provided this Committee had the power to enforce policy change based on appropriate advice from the Office of Road Safety and the governance oversight committee of the Office of Road Safety. This Standing Committee would require bipartisan support to ensure success.

- d. *measures to ensure state, territory and local government road infrastructure investment incorporates the Safe System principles.*

The construction of safe roads with built in safety features for all users would be relatively easy to enforce once appropriate guidelines were developed according to accepted and effective proven international guidelines. This could be overseen by the Federal Office of Road Safety with the incorporation of established road safety features by the states, territories and local government required for the maintenance of Federal funding.

- e. *road trauma and incident data collection and coordination across Australia*

The Australasian Trauma Society supports the proposal by the AAA that *the Office of Road Safety coordinates Australia's road safety data collection, analysis and reporting capabilities. Robust data must be used to inform road safety interventions and this data must underpin measurable targets, transparent reporting and real accountability. As a matter of urgency, Commonwealth, state and territory governments should decide upon a measurement of serious injury and regularly report on it.*



*The Office of Road Safety should administer a national AusRAP hub to maximise the life-saving potential of Australian Government infrastructure investment and meet the agreed policy targets for 3-star and better roads across Australia.*

*f. recommending strategies, performance measures and targets for the next National Road Safety Strategy*

A key to the achievement of an improvement in the next NRSS will be a determined and gradual effort to achieve all aspects of the Safe System Strategy and maintain the momentum once preliminary success is achieved.

In the *2018 Inquiry into the NRSS 2011-2020* by Associate Professor Jeremy Woolley and Dr John Crozier, there were a number of recommendations which included the following:

- *Set a vision zero target for 2050 with an interim target of vision zero for all major capital city CBD areas and high-volume highways by 2030*
- *Establish and commit to key performance indicators in time for the next NRSS that measure and report how harm can be eliminated in the system and that are published annually*
- *Implement rapid deployment and accelerated uptake of proven vehicle safety technologies and innovation*
- *Accelerate the adoption of speed management initiatives that support harm elimination*
- *Invest in road safety focused infrastructure, safe system and mobility partnerships with state, territory and local government that accelerate elimination of high risk roads*
- *Make road safety a genuine part of business as usual within the Commonwealth, state, territory and local government*

*g. recommendations for the role of the newly established Office of Road Safety*

- This body should be independent and report directly to the Federal Cabinet Minister responsible for road safety, who should have bipartisan support to implement key recommendations of the Office of Road Safety.
- The Office should have the ability to communicate and enforce agreed and proven road safety strategies across all levels of government.
- It should support the latest research in vehicle safety and in building a safer capacity into the road system
- Most importantly it should be accountable for the implementation of various road safety targets across all jurisdictions
- There should be a peer selected governing body of the Office for Road Safety from the various interested professional colleges and societies which can assist with policy development and report bi-annually on the success of implementation.



- h. other measures to support the Australian Parliament's ongoing resolve to reduce incidents on our roads, with a focus on the recommendations from the Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020.*

Good governance and oversight of evidence-based recommendations for the reduction of road trauma from the Office of Road Safety are key to the successful implementation of the next version of the NRSS 2021-2030.

One of the main reasons for the lack of any significant success in the 2011-2020 NRSS was the lack of coordination of strategy and policies designed to lead to a decrease in the national road toll for deaths and serious injuries by the agreed target of 30%.

The Office of Road Safety should report successes or failures regularly (at least twice per year) in a transparent and open way and this reporting should have the ability to stimulate appropriate responses from Federal, state and local governments according to their various jurisdictions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of the Australasian Trauma Society on the issues raised by the Terms of Reference for the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety.

We believe that road trauma is one of the most important issues facing Australian society today as there are many Australians of all ages being injured or losing their lives unnecessarily due to the lack of a coordinated and safe road transport system in this country.

The establishment of the Office of Road Safety is an important step in the right direction and success or failure will depend on the right membership and a determined ability to influence policy development in order to decrease death or serious injury by 50% on our roads by 2030 and to zero by 2050.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Anthony Joseph  
ATS representative for the NRSS

Prof Michael Reade, AM  
President ATS