



23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021

Joint Select Committee on Road Safety  
PO Box 6021

CANBERRA ACT 2601

*Via online submission*

## Submission to Inquiry into Road Safety by Joint Select Committee on Road Safety

Ref: NTRTA, WRF and TSG Joint submission to Office of Road Safety 23 Mar 21

### About This Submission

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This is a joint submission by:

**Northern Territory Road Transport Association:** The NTRTA is the recognised peak industry body for the Northern Territory road transport and logistics industry.

**Western Roads Federation:** WRF is the recognised peak industry body for the Western Australian road transport and logistics industry.

**TraumaSim Group:** TraumaSim Group is an Australian owned company providing trauma simulation products and services for the Defence, Medical, Police, Mining and Education markets in Australia, USA, Europe and Middle East.

### Focus of Submission - Remote Area Road Safety Post-crash response

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*"An industry survey of 156 Remote and Regional Truck Drivers found that nearly 70% had been first responders at road accidents, of which 75% stated that they had been first responder for over 30 minutes until professional help arrived".*

The focus of our joint submission is on Remote Area Road Safety, specifically post-crash response. In the supporting documents of the draft Road Safety Plan 2021 to 2030 it notes that:



*Remote area post-crash response identifies that crash response times are longer in remote areas and notes that some deaths may be prevented by improving emergency alert methods.*

The road transport industry in the NT and WA have a unique perspective on road safety in remote areas. This perspective has been developed through the experiences of our members operating in Australia's remote areas.

### **Limitations of Emergency Information Apps**

The proposed method in the draft Road Safety Plan 2021 to 2030 to improve emergency response by using an App whilst appealing, ignores the fact that large areas of our remote area highway network let alone remote secondary roads do not have mobile phone reception.

The use of the App should not be discounted however its significant limitations in remote areas also needs to be acknowledged.

### **Longer Response Time**

Regardless of the efficiency of contacting emergency services, in remote Australia there will be an inevitable prolonged period of time until professional first responders can arrive. Unfortunately, this delay period awaiting professional assistance can often be the most critical in determining the survivability or long-term injury of people involved in the accident.

### **Consideration of Truck Drivers as First Responders**

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We believe that an additional solution should be training Truck Drivers as first responders in remote areas.

The reason is simple as often it is Truck Drivers who are the first responders at vehicle accidents. For example,

*In 2019, a truck driver was the first responder on a remote regional road where he was required to provide substantial first aid for nearly three hours until emergency services arrived. The single vehicle accident involved a family with young children, where one adult was deceased and the other in critical condition.*

These stories are all too common in remote and regional WA and the NT, as they are in remote areas across Australia. Where Truck drivers have been first responders at accidents from very serious to fatal, they have been required to:



- administer first aid often for prolonged periods (in some cases up to 3 hours),
- call and assist emergency services in locating the accident site, and
- in some instances, also try and ensure the safety of the site from other approaching vehicles.

Once relieved of their tasks by emergency services, the Truck Driver is often allowed to continue their journey, without consideration of their mental health both in the immediate and longer term.

### **Truck Drivers Are Better Connected**

A key limitation in remote areas is the lack of mobile phone coverage. However, a number of remote area Truck Drivers carry Satellite Phones. If they don't, the CB network is used to connect to another driver to relay messages.

An increasing number of Trucks are GPS tracked so there is the potential to more accurately locate the position of the accident. The option exists with some providers of this Vehicle Tracking technology to enable drivers to two-way messaging or hit a duress alarm via the Iridium satellite network, where no mobile data coverage is available. Such systems automatically switch from the mobile network to the Iridium network when mobile coverage is not available.

### **Pilot Training Program Conducted**

A very limited pilot training program was conducted to train Truck Drivers in the NT and WA. The program was funded by the Federal Government Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative. The 4-hour training program used advanced training techniques used by the Military and Police.

The program leverages work undertaken by TraumaSim with the:

**Queensland Police.** Where a training program resulted has resulted in over 60 lives being documented as saved in 3 years by the Queensland Police. An achievement that subsequently led to them receiving the Global Policing Award 2019., in London.

**ADF.** Where TraumaSim has helped prepare combat medics and soldiers prior to deployment to prepare for the realities of dealing with traumatic injury. This preparation has helped save lives on the battlefield and is equally applicable to remote area road safety.



The above-mentioned training has also been linked to reducing the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for the responding personnel as it improves resilience and competency, providing them with the confidence that they did all they could at the incident.

The program taught truck drivers:

- Action to be taken after coming upon an accident, including ensuring personal safety, communication of accident to other road users, accident site protection.
- How to communicate directly with emergency services, including RFDS, and what sort of information will be required.
- Maintaining safety at the scene for both the driver and others, in daylight and night-time incidents.
- Conducting a more detailed casualty assessment (once critical life saving techniques have been applied) to look for and identify any other injuries that may require treatment and/or management.
- Dealing with trauma victims for extended periods before the arrival of emergency services personnel and improvising when needed.
- How to identify and recognise signs and symptoms of PTSD and/or other mental health issues and where to seek help.

### **Expansion of the Program and Incentive**

Given the success of the program, consideration should be given to rolling out the program across remote and regional Australia, focusing on both Truck Drivers and Remote Area workers.

Furthermore, consideration could be given to enabling suitably trained Drivers to be given a sign for their vehicle that designates them as a Remote Area trained first aider.

Such a recognition should be supported by a public marketing campaign to increase community awareness of the road safety contribution these drivers are making.

To generate company level support a similar recognition could also be given.



## Recommendations

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**Recommendation One:** We believe that consideration should be given to including an additional method of reducing post-accident response times, by training Truck Drivers and other frequent travellers in remote areas in this program.

Undertaking this training would increase the likelihood of having a capable first responder in the vicinity of the accident. A person whose skills may well help save a life or reduce the risk of serious injury.

**Recommendation Two:** That consideration be given to providing incentives for remote area transport operators to install the two way messaging via the Iridium network option in order to improve emergency services response.