

ancap

Australian New Car Assessment Program
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Mr Paul Neville MP
House Transport Committee Chair
Parliament House
Canberra City ACT 2600

Dear Mr Neville

I refer to the recent press release announcing the upcoming House of Representatives Transport and Regional Services Committees inquiry into national road safety.

The National Road Safety Strategy estimated that improvements in vehicle safety standards would contribute one quarter of the targeted 40% reduction in fatality rate. Improvements in vehicle safety standards and design were identified to both raise the level of occupant protection and reduce the hazard to non-occupants struck by a vehicle.

Both the 2000-2001 and 2002-2003 Road Safety Action Plans included promotion of vehicle crashworthiness ratings as measured by the Australian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) as a measure to meet this important part of the strategy.

I am sure that you are well aware that consumer crash testing programs are now operating world wide through EuroNCAP, USNCAP, The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety programs, Japan NCAP, Korean NCAP and Australian NCAP.

The NCAP programs have resulted, as shown by various studies conducted throughout the world, in passenger cars providing levels of occupant protection that exceed the regulatory standard. This was highlighted at a recent international conference, the 17th International Conference on the Enhanced Safety of Vehicles (ESV), held in Nagoya, Japan, where papers from a range of specialists on the NCAP programs were presented.

I have included for your information the role that other organisations see NCAP (quotes taken from papers presented at the ESV conference in Japan) for you to consider.

“Today and in the past, vehicle safety has mainly been associated with passive safety performance. It is the predominant discipline of safety and a matter of global competition. Although passive safety has improved tremendously over the last decades, fatality and serious injury rates are still high throughout the world. Increasing traffic densities and total miles driven per year absorb the passive safety improvements in regard. One should bear in mind: With established consumer tests like IIHS, Euro NCAP, US NCAP, Japan NCAP and Australian NCAP (which are well received by the public) the general vehicle passive safety performance considerably exceeds current legal requirements. For example, European legal requirements would receive a 1.3 star rating by Euro NCAP standards. However, current state of the art rating is a 4 star rating. Today more and more vehicles are even achieving the highest scores, with 5 stars. This shows one important trend in automotive business: it’s not just legislation but mainly a private/public partnership, which paves the way to successful results. This proactive industrial behavior leads to intense collaborations between legislative parties, consumer organizations and the automotive industry”.

(A BALANCED ACTIVE AND PASSIVE SAFETY CONCEPT FOR NEW VEHICLE GENERATIONS

Klaus Werkmeister

Nils Borchers BMW Germany Paper No. 352)

“The UK devotes significant resources to its national transport research portfolio every year giving consumers objective information on how cars perform in crash tests, and potentially in other areas, is an important mechanism which supplements the bedrock of legislative standards. Euro NCAP has had a significant effect over the last six years. There has been wide media coverage and, in turn, a greater awareness of car safety among the general public. I am pleased to say that manufacturers have responded extremely well in terms of occupant protection, and since the last ESV we have started to see cars with 5 star ratings. Sadly we have still to break the 4 star barrier for pedestrian protection. But we are getting much closer to the introduction of pedestrian proposals in Europe, and I am hopeful that this will prompt improvement in both the typical and the best Euro NCAP pedestrian scores, even before 2005 when the European Commission proposals are intended to begin coming into effect.

While Euro NCAP assesses the secondary safety aspects of vehicles, the UK is investigating the feasibility of an NCAP that assesses primary safety – PNCAP. UK research covers five areas – braking/stability, lighting, visibility, handling, and ergonomics.”

(UNITED KINGDOM - STATUS REPORT

Peter O’Reilly and Ian Knowles

Department for Transport)

Vehicle safety design has improved dramatically in recent years, spurred in part by consumer crash testing programmes. Research on behalf of the European Commission has found that each star awarded to a car by Euro NCAP can be associated with a reduction of almost 10% in fatal accident risk to occupants.

To present the Australian context I have attached two presentations to this letter. These presentations, from a recent seminar held by the Society of Automotive Engineers, Australasia and Engineers Australia on New Car Assessment Programs and Vehicle Occupant Vulnerability in Incompatible

Vehicles outline crashworthiness and occupant protection improvements in Australian vehicles since the introduction of ANCAP.

Currently, the ANCAP stakeholders include all Australian automobile clubs, all state governments, the New Zealand national government, New Zealand automobile club and the FIA Foundation (a road safety foundation founded by the international association of automobile clubs). Australia is the only country where the national government is not a major stakeholder in the NCAP being undertaken in that country.

The Australian government, through the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS), has previously cooperated with ANCAP in certain programs. Two successful programs were demonstrating the effectiveness of drivers' airbags and our pedestrian testing program as part of which DOTARS used as a major input into their regulatory development program.

DOTARS no longer participate in any part of ANCAP even though the 2003-2004 Road Safety Action Plan includes ANCAP as actions to improve vehicle safety. The plan recognises that consumer information about vehicle safety is available from ANCAP and that a greater understanding of the ratings would encourage consumers to use this information in their purchasing decisions leading to incentives for vehicle manufacturers to supply vehicles with advanced safety features.

Two actions are included in the plan to achieve this;

1. A campaign to promote awareness of ANCAP with governments leading by example in implementing safe fleet policies.
2. Mandate display of occupant protection safety rating (e.g. ANCAP rating) on new and used cars displayed for sale if the rating is available.

The lack of the federal government's participation must be considered in terms of the overall cost of ANCAP and the benefits delivered so far as expressed in the quotes included earlier. The yearly ANCAP budget is approximately \$1.5 million, which equates to less than \$2 per passenger vehicle sold in Australia. The government currently receives \$7.50 per car sold in Australia through sale of compliance plates, for expected total revenue in excess of \$6.5 million this calendar year.

I request that your inquiry considers the role of the Australian government in promoting vehicle crashworthiness. I believe that the national government should join the state governments and the New Zealand government in recognising the benefits of ANCAP through committing at least \$500,000 per year to ANCAP.

To continue to deliver improvements in vehicle safety standards and design, the ANCAP testing program needs to not only continue but also to expand into new areas such as evaluating and reporting on the benefits of active safety systems and different crash configurations. ANCAP requires additional

stakeholders with a commitment to safety such as the Australian government to continue to achieve its aims of promoting improvements in vehicle safety.

The ANCAP participants would be happy to discuss this further with you.

Kind regards

Lauchlan McIntosh
CHAIR, MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Enclosure