



2 December 2021

Committee Secretariat
Joint Select Committee on Road Safety
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Subject: Joint Select Committee on Road Safety's Inquiry into Road Safety

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is the national voice of local government, representing 537 councils employing over 190,000 people across the country. In structure, ALGA is a federation of state and territory local government associations (LGAs). This submission should be read in conjunction with the separate submissions received from LGAs and individual councils.

In preparing this submission, we have consulted and received advice and comments from our member associations. Our members have provided detailed perspectives from a local government perspective. As a result, the advocacy priorities in this submission collectively provide integrated and considered responses to the issues raised in the Terms of Reference, provided at Attachment A.

Roads are the most significant asset class for local government, which manages a third of Australia's public infrastructure assets with only 3.5 per cent of the country's tax revenue. This substantial mismatch between local government's asset responsibility and revenue capacity was highlighted by the Australian Government's 2018 Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (NRSS). The NRSS Inquiry report noted local government lacks the resources it requires to address road safety challenges.

The fundamental challenges councils face in managing the road network will also be explored in the updated technical assessment of local government non-financial assets, known as the 2021 National State of the Assets (NSoA21), prepared by the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia for ALGA. The ALGA President Cr Linda Scott will formally launch the NsoA21 to the Australian, state and territory governments, industry bodies and public interest groups on 9 December 2021.

In summary, it is important we address the lack of capacity and resource constraints in local government. Recognition of a lack of local funding and skill shortages in transport, particularly engineering, are critical aspects. Councils play a major role in leading the community, including by bringing together and consulting with industry and community leaders on road safety. We seek recognition of the role of local government and a commitment to developing authentic partnerships with government with a common vision to progress the national Safe System approach toward a future of zero harm from road crashes.

ALGA's recommendations

Consistent with ALGA's earlier submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety, we would like to reiterate the following recommendations on transport and road safety.

1. Develop authentic partnership arrangements built on a common vision and goals, with appropriate resources enabling councils to participate fully and effectively in their role to reduce road trauma.
2. Identify and quantify the differences and gaps in road standards to understand the extent of the task required to bring the network up to a Safe System standard.
3. Develop a program supporting innovation through funding of demonstration projects and encouraging others by showcasing projects (such as Infrastructure Partnerships Australia's National Infrastructure Awards).
4. Review current standards, including maintenance standards of road lining and signing, to ensure these methods adequately inform road users of appropriate behaviours and comfortable and safe travel speeds.
5. Develop a means of monitoring the level and extent of implementation (process evaluation) to understand what effort achieves certain results and to identify gaps in implementation.
6. Provide local government with access to consistently accurate and timely road trauma and crash incident data to guide decision making.
7. Explore opportunities to develop and apply a systems-based methodology to road crash investigations, similar to aviation investigations.
8. With the Australian, state and territory governments, develop a method of collating data to enable national reporting of 'serious injury' information.

ALGA's federal election priorities as they relate to economic recovery and transport infrastructure:

In the lead up to the 2022 federal election, ALGA will be seeking the following commitments:

1. An initial injection of financial assistance grants to local government worth \$1.3 billion to support communities and jobs and also resolve the current practice of bringing forward two quarterly financial assistance grant payments each year.
2. A commitment to return financial assistance grants to at least one per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue (an additional 1.598 billion per year).
3. A \$500 million per annum, four-year continuation of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program which allows councils to deliver projects that respond to local needs.
4. A strategic local roads investment program of \$300 million per annum over four years to address road transport first and last mile issues and congestion on local roads.
5. An increase in Roads to Recovery to \$800 million per annum (an additional \$300 million per annum) and the Black Spot Program to \$200 million per annum over four years, while addressing the South Australian road funding anomaly by making the additional \$20 million per annum to SA in 2021-22 and 2022-23 permanent, to more sustainably manage local government's 75 per cent share of the national road network and boost productivity and road safety.

Yours sincerely

Matt Pinnegar
Chief Executive

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety's Inquiry into Road Safety: Terms of Reference

(a) Measures to support the Australian Parliament's ongoing resolve to eliminate road crash fatal and serious injuries with a focus on ways to achieving Vision Zero by 2050

The impact of road trauma is well documented in financial terms, but trauma has substantial impact, especially in remote and regional areas. This is because most victims of road crashes in regional areas are local residents, and the social impact is great.

The ripple effect associated with each road crash extends well beyond those directly affected. There are very few Australians who have not been affected, either directly or indirectly, as a result of road trauma. Tragically, the reduction in road trauma over past decades has stalled.

While we reflect on past performance, the disaster confronting us is the 12,000 people who will be killed (on current trends) on Australian roads—and the 360,000 people who will be hospitalised—at an aggregated cost of over \$300 billion over the next decade.¹

(b) The effectiveness of existing road safety programs across Australia; opportunities to improve them and encourage broader take-up of effective approaches

The lack of success in the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (NRSS) indicates existing road safety support services and programs are not as effective as they could be. From a local perspective, there is insufficient funding for the Australian Government's Black Spot Program with no clear alignment between national and state strategies.

It is useful to understand what this landscape means for local government. Firstly, the capacity of councils should be explained both in terms of financial and engineering expertise, with 77 per cent of road length to be managed with access to only 3.5 per cent of the country's tax revenue. Many regional and rural councils also have limited access to the technical expertise they require, with a growing shortage of engineers. We note the Government's 2018 Inquiry into the effectiveness of the NRSS recommended additional investment in road safety, some of which could be used to establish a road safety fund.

At the operational level, there are competing priorities for road use which can manifest themselves in safety being traded off for productivity and access. There are competing pressures on councils for access to local roads for heavy vehicles from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) and under the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy, as highlighted by the NRSS Inquiry.

As the level of government closest to the community, councils manage and deliver community priorities. Road access issues are a priority to councils, together with several other competing demands, including the provision of sport, recreation and other community infrastructure.

State and territory local government associations (LGAs) continue to collaborate with state road safety agencies and work in partnership to progress the national road safety agenda. An example from the WA Local Government Association (WALGA) is outlined below.

Road safety and the WA Local Government Association (WALGA)

The efforts and initiative demonstrated by WALGA provide an excellent example of what can be delivered at the local level in collaboration with states. Since 1994, the association has delivered

¹ [Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020](#)

WA's local government and community road safety program, known as the RoadWise Program. The WA Government provides funding for the RoadWise Program, supported by councils with financial and in-kind contributions for local road safety action.

The RoadWise Program involves a team of regional and metropolitan based officers working to build the capacity of WA's community road safety network to mitigate risk of death or serious injury. Building capacity involves improving individual skills, strengthening community action, and empowering organisations to take responsibility for road safety and contribute to better road safety outcomes.

Austroroads reports local government has over half of all crashes, at a crash rate nearly double that of state managed roads. Through their strategic and operational functions, councils have significant influence on road system design. Recognition and commitment to supporting local government in its roles is key to developing inclusive partnerships to progress the Safe System approach towards a future of zero harm from road crashes.

(c) Opportunities for government policy in health, education, industry, transport and other areas to contribute to road trauma elimination, integrating Safe System principles

ALGA believes measures should be incentives, not punitive punishments. State and territory government assistance is required to embed the Safe System principles understood in varying degrees by councils.

Road system designers and users play a vital role in implementing of the Safe System approach for the local network. Councils play a strategic and operational role as road and planning authorities and fleet managers and in community development and leadership. They also face substantial challenges in managing large and geographically dispersed networks. These challenges, coupled with capacity constraints (limited funds, staff and training), limit Safe System improvements.

Another challenge is the widening gap in safety performance between rural and remote and urban networks and between national, state and local networks. Significant difficulties lie in applying cost effective transformations to a vast network with low crash densities, compared to interventions in urban areas and inner-city routes with higher populations, traffic volumes and crash densities.

The risk of drivers being involved in a fatal crash can lie between one and a half and two times higher on the local network compared to the state network. Austroroads has previously attributed the higher risk to some features of the local network, including a generally lower road standard and human behaviour associated with the more diverse mix of road users on local roads.

As part of the effort to achieve the long-term vision of the NRSS that 'no person should be killed or seriously injured on Australia's roads', it is assumed applying Safe System principles to transform the network will require improving the current accepted minimum standard to the Safe System standard or quality. In reality, large parts of the aging network do not yet meet the current standard, so the investment required to achieve a Safe System standard is likely to be substantially underestimated.

ALGA also acknowledges speed management is a crucial aspect in reducing death and serious injury, noting this approach should be managed in consultation with stakeholders. In WALGA's experience, progressive targeted lowering of speed limits in high volume areas of pedestrian or other vulnerable road user activity is more effective when planned in consultation with local government and communities. In collaboration with councils, WALGA's RoadWise Program advocates for speed limit reductions in selected areas.

In reference to speed limits, a road is self-explaining if driving above the speed limit is uncomfortable. Progressing changes to facilitate implementation of self-explaining roads may hasten the beneficial lowering of travel speeds across the entire road network. Roads are self-explaining when they are consistent with the expectations of the road user, eliciting safe behaviour by design, which includes application and maintenance of lining and signing.

(d) Opportunities to embed road trauma prevention across government

Councils will benefit significantly from access to granular information on the number of fatalities and serious crashes in their local areas. As stated previously, councils own and manage a significant proportion of the road network in Australia. Local government is also responsible for the safety performance of its network, which road trauma and crash incident data informs.

Opportunities exist for national leadership regarding road crash data. Implementing a Safe System approach remains the country's best chance to address the social and economic costs of road injuries and death. However, the challenges and opportunities in road safety mostly relate to our ability to implement and deliver on the Safe System principles effectively. Data collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting are important activities supporting the implementation of road safety strategies.

Data from different sources would inform road safety strategies in the future, for example, the findings of road crash investigations undertaken by multidisciplinary teams analysing the underlying cause of contributing factors.