Draft National Road Safety Strategy feedback

23 March 2021

General Comments

It is acknowledged that the draft national strategy document circulated for consultation represents a high-level document and does not contain much of the detail regarding resourcing, actions, future governance and implementation. The following feedback is provided with this context in mind however it should be stressed that a thorough assessment is not possible in the absence of much of that information.

Overall the strategy is "nudging" several initiatives in a positive direction and will contribute to ongoing incremental improvements in the national road safety response. There is much good intent outlined and acknowledgement of the need to look at different ways of tackling some key issues, such as support for Local Government. The adoption of key principles and discussion of enablers are a useful way to set the scene for the further development work that will be essential. It is evident that many of the initiatives are in their infancy and will require much work during the life of the strategy to achieve the desired outcomes.

It is noted that a response on the recommendations of the 2018 Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy are not a part of the draft strategy document. Where this strategy could be differentiated most from previous strategies will be the way in which it strategically deals with the "implementation failure" of the past. Information on this and the governance and accountability arrangements put in place as the strategy development progresses will be highly anticipated by the road safety community.

In keeping with the high-level nature of the draft document, feedback is sorted into four categories to highlight our major observations.

Improvement

- The time stamped aspiration of Zero is strong and clear and the long-term directions articulated on page 3 are an important inclusion.
- The adoption of Movement and Place represents a significant step forward – like the Safe System however, knowledge and capacity to use this framework to benefit safety will need to be strategically managed in order to achieve successful outcomes.
- Broaching future progress around enablers is a good approach. The list of enablers should be allowed to expand during the life of the strategy as the Data Hub identifies further system gaps that need addressing.
- The opportunity for an external advisory refence group (page 2) and independent review and mid-term assessment (page 25) is regarded as a critical inclusion. A Parliamentary Standing Committee or similar would also provide an additional layer of oversight and nurture bilateral support.
- The establishment of a Data Hub and its role in performance monitoring and strategy / action plan fine tuning is regarded as vital – significant benefit will result by looking at new sources of data not covered in traditional road safety related databases and the identification of system performance gaps.
- Using admitted to hospital as the criteria for serious injury is strongly supported.

Ambiguous

- The future role and form of the Office of Road Safety is not articulated – ideally what will the Office grow into over the life of the Strategy and what aspirations exist? There is also an opportunity to give the new Office a profile by describing it in the final pages of the document.
- The translation of various frameworks and objectives into key priority areas of the strategy could be more consistent, for example: network safety plans are not mentioned in infrastructure investment and planning; reduction in age of the vehicle fleet mentioned on page 3 could be applied to several priority areas such as Vehicle Safety, Remote areas and WHS.
- In noting the discussion on page 19 under "Data", the role of research and further understanding of gaps in the system could be made more explicit. How will the research be resourced and managed strategically? For example, is the lack of no-blame investigation activity seen as a strategic shortcoming for the nation and would this be an assessment made by the Data Hub?

Omissions

- The emphasis on Local Government is a very positive development. However, despite the existence of the simple Austroads method for conducting Network Safety Assessments, more diverse ways of supporting local government are likely to be required for the cultural change to occur in engineering practices. Monitoring and the continual refinement of actions in this sector will be essential to ensure sustained success.
- Although mentioned in a Local Government context, the upskilling and capacity building required across all sectors for the nation to get to zero is regarded as a major omission. Large parts of federal, state/territory, local government, private sector and NGOs do not have a sound understanding of the Safe System and its application. *A significantly improved road safety response is not possible unless the associated workforce can differentiate between good and bad*

(or outdated) safety practices. This requires strategic commitment and management at all levels to ensure a capability with sufficient and sustained critical mass is achieved. Organisations will not pursue upskilling and knowledge transfer if they do not perceive a problem with their capability.

- There is a need to communicate the risk profile of the nation's roads. Whether it is via iRAP/AusRAP, ANRAM or other methods it will be difficult to compare and communicate the transformation of the road network (including progress in following network safety plans) unless a strategic baseline is established. We understand this issue is contentious amongst road agencies however Australia is lagging international practices significantly and maintains a situation where the community is not fully informed on safety issues.

- The modelling exercise on crash and injury reductions may not yet be complete. When available, the strategy would benefit from clearer communication on the scale of effort required with various key initiatives to make progress and achieve desired outcomes in each of the priority areas.

Other comments

Page 14 - If interested, CASR can offer some research that can provide an update to the Wramborg curves shown in the discussion on speed management. We can also refer you to updated pedestrian curves out of the University of NSW.

Page 16 Heavy vehicle safety – nothing is articulated on regulatory and enforcement aspirations.

Page 17 – Workplace safety – a notable addition would be to ensure that adequate information was available to employers for informed decision making: vehicle safety ratings, network risk ratings and risky behaviours to manage.

Page 19 Transformation of the system (as a performance indicator) – the inclusion of this component is regarded as vital.

Page 19 Data – The focus on system issues and new and improved sources of data is an essential inclusion. Will it be the role of the Data Hub to determine the strategic data needs assessment?

Page 23 – What is different about this strategy: the intent demonstrated here is the single most important opportunity the new strategy can embrace. Tactics to avoid the "implementation failure" of the past strategy will require strong ongoing commitment and strategic governance. Past actions were rarely defined in terms of timelines, resources, capability, funding, accountability and consideration of scale of response to achieve a meaningful outcome. There is an opportunity with this strategy to address these historical deficiencies.
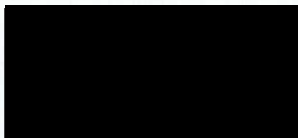
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