RAC State Budget Submission 2027-28

Priorities for a safer, sustainable and connected WA

RAC
For the better

WA is on track to record its worst level of road deaths in almost two decades. In addition to road safety improvements - pressure on the health system, fuel security challenges, cost-of-living pressures and government priorities in the defence and manufacturing sectors are competing for Treasury's attention.





The 2027-28 State Budget is an opportunity to invest in evidence-based transport initiatives that will save lives, prevent serious injuries, improve public health, reduce harmful vehicle emissions and better connect Western Australians. The initiatives identified in this submission will reduce pressure on our health system, support Western Australians through the cost of living crisis, while helping safeguard WA's productivity and liveability.

The proposed budget initiatives in this submission align with the following priorities identified in *WA Government Priorities 2025-29*:

- Building safe and inclusive communities
- Protecting and restoring our environment
- Delivering quality infrastructure and services across our state
- Health – promoting active healthy lifestyles

RAC's six priorities for the 2027-28 State Budget are:

1. A safety barrier completion program for WA's freeways and high-speed divided highways.
2. Enabling local governments to implement safer speed limits at scale across their networks.
3. Completion of the Regional Road Safety Program, applying low-cost safety treatments on country roads across the state and local government road networks.
4. Expediting the delivery of cycling infrastructure and enhancing streets and places for active travel.
5. Accelerating investment in bus priority measures along key corridors to support improved reliability and uptake of public transport in Perth.
6. Scaling up electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the supply of affordable used electric vehicles (EVs).

Our key priorities

1. Safety barrier completion program on freeways and high-speed divided highways

WA continues to invest heavily in freeways and high-speed divided highways that carry large volumes of traffic across Perth and between Perth and the South West. However, substantial sections of these corridors lack continuous roadside and median safety barriers, leaving road users exposed to high-severity run-off-road crashes at speeds of 100 or 110 km/h. Between 2021 and 2025, Forrest Highway, Tonkin Highway and Kwinana Freeway recorded a combined 57 fatal or serious run-off-road crashes.

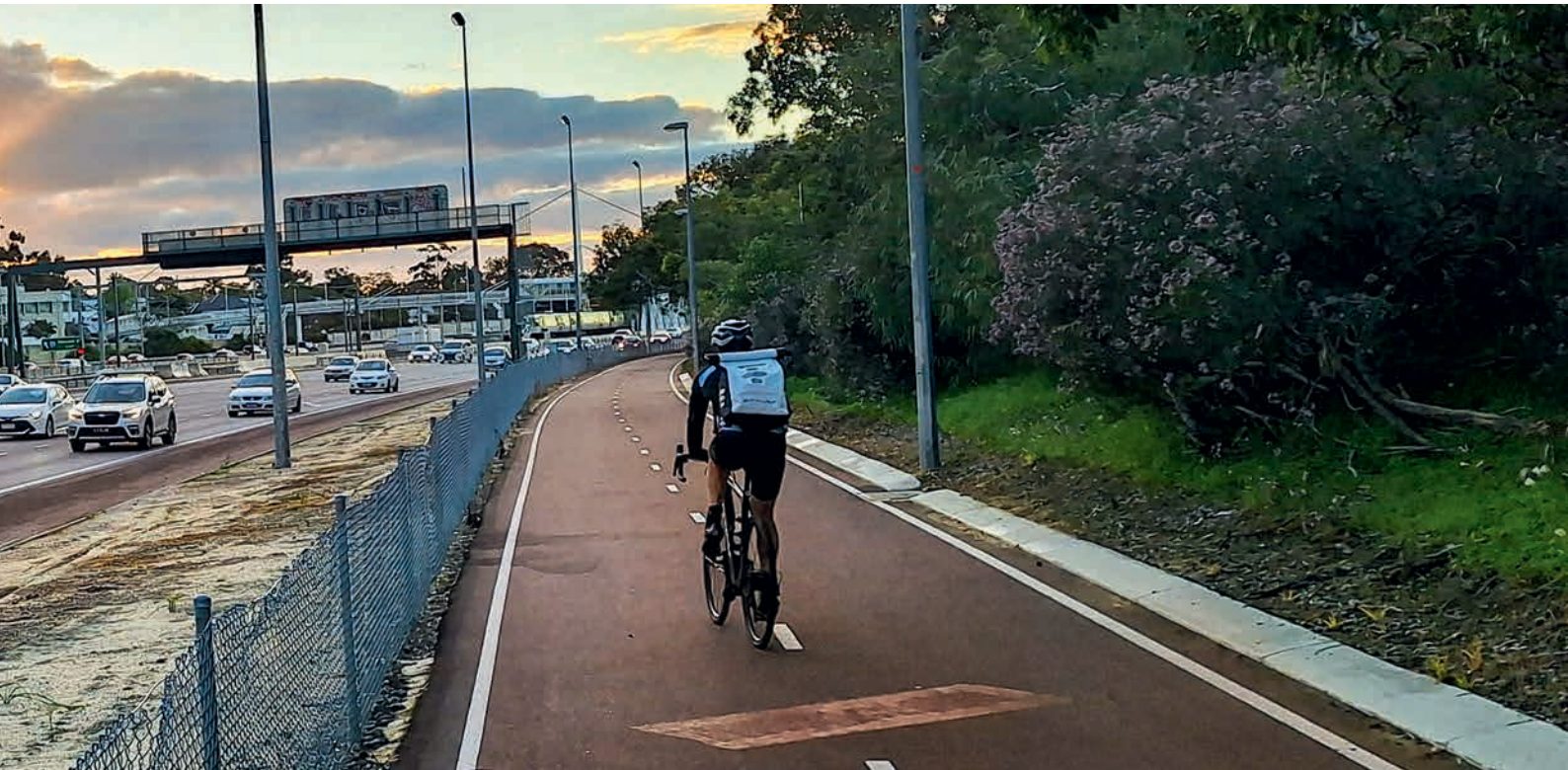
Safety barriers are one of the most effective treatments for preventing deaths and serious injuries from these crashes. Main Roads WA guidance indicates that flexible and semi-rigid barriers can reduce fatal and serious run-off-road crashes by 91 per cent, while Austroads recommends their systematic installation on freeways and high-speed divided rural highways rather than only at identified hazards. Current projects will close some gaps, but do not provide a coordinated pathway to complete the network.

RAC proposes a dedicated safety barrier completion program to audit and prioritise remaining gaps and progressively install continuous roadside and median barriers across WA's freeway and high-speed divided highway network. Initial delivery should focus on Kwinana Freeway, Mitchell Freeway, Tonkin Highway and Forrest Highway, while ensuring continuous barriers are incorporated into relevant major upgrade projects.



The challenge:

- WA continues to invest heavily in extending and upgrading freeways and high-speed divided highways to move large volumes of traffic more safely and efficiently across Perth and between Perth and the South West. This strategic network includes Mitchell Fwy, Kwinana Fwy, Tonkin Hwy, Reid Hwy, Roe Hwy and Forrest Hwy, Wilman Wadandi Hwy and the recently duplicated northern section of Bussell Hwy. These roads are predominantly speed zoned at 100 or 110 km/h.[1]
- However, substantial sections of most of these corridors still lack a critical safety feature to support safe high-speed travel, namely continuous roadside and median barriers. This means that when a driver leaves the traffic lane, the road environment may still allow a high-severity crash such as a rollover or a collision with a tree, signage, opposing traffic, or people walking and riding on adjacent Principal Shared Paths. These corridors perform critical movement functions and carry high traffic volumes, so safety gaps expose large numbers of road users to avoidable risk every day.
- Run-off-road crashes continue to result in deaths and serious injuries on WA's freeways and high-speed divided highways. Between 2021 and 2025, Forrest Hwy recorded 23 fatal or serious run-off-road crashes, while Tonkin Hwy recorded 18 and Kwinana Fwy recorded 16. Other major corridors, including Mitchell Fwy and Roe Hwy, recorded at least five fatal or serious run-off-road crashes over the same period. In addition, fatal and serious head-on crashes sometimes occur despite the presence of a wide median, including three on Forrest Hwy and three on Roe Hwy between 2021 and 2025.[2]
- Available crash data suggests that several corridors with substantial barrier gaps experience high numbers of fatal and serious run-off-road crashes, with Forrest Hwy and the southern section of Tonkin Hwy having few continuous barrier sections and large sections of Kwinana Fwy lacking continuous roadside barriers. While Mitchell Fwy's safety barriers are more extensive, there are notable gaps, for example in Craigie alongside bushland and in Leederville adjacent to the Principal Shared Path.
- Although recent state investment has provided funding for some barrier works on Roe Hwy, Mitchell Fwy and Forrest Hwy[3], and the Tonkin Hwy Corridor[4] and Kwinana Fwy Upgrade[5] programs include barrier improvements, these projects do not systematically address the gaps and the network remains incomplete.



The opportunity:

Safety barriers are one of the most effective infrastructure treatments available for preventing fatal and serious injury outcomes from run-off-road crashes. Main Roads WA's Treatment Resource Guide states that flexible and semi-rigid barriers can be expected to reduce run-off-road fatal and serious crashes by 91 per cent. It also notes that continuous barrier lengths are generally more effective than isolated treatments at protecting specific hazards, and that clear zones should not be seen to eliminate the risk of run-off-road crashes. Rollover crashes, even on flat terrain, are still possible and a larger component of road safety risk than traditionally thought.[6]

Austroads guidance identifies barriers as the primary Safe System treatment for run-off-road crashes. Treatments rolled out through the WA Regional Road Safety Program, namely wide sealed shoulders with audible line marking, are considered supporting treatments that move towards Safe System alignment (but can be implemented cost effectively across a broader high-speed road network).[7]

Austroads recommends that barriers be installed on verges and in medians of freeways and divided rural highways with speed limits of 100km/h or higher, rather than only in response to identified site-specific hazards. It also notes that roadside safety for many roads, with divided carriageways and operating speeds less than 100 km/h, would benefit from the installation of barriers. In practice, this means continuous barrier systems should be treated as core safety infrastructure on high-speed divided roads.

The Regional Road Safety Program has demonstrated that systematic, corridor-based infrastructure improvements can deliver substantial reductions in road trauma when rolled out at scale on high-speed undivided roads. Applying the same program logic to higher volume high-speed divided roads would help address a different but equally important infrastructure gap: major high-speed movement corridors that are lacking safety barriers. Applying these treatments on regional highways also aligns with the *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030*, which under its regional road safety priority identifies the action of implementing staged Safe System treatments for roads with higher traffic volumes, including median and roadside flexible safety barriers.

A dedicated safety barrier completion program would provide a transparent pathway for Main Roads WA to: undertake a network-wide audit of remaining median and roadside barrier gaps; develop a prioritised delivery pipeline based on crash history, traffic exposure, roadside risk and opportunities for integrating works into existing programs; and progressively install new barriers. It would also facilitate the installation of continuous safety barriers as part of any major upgrade projects on the freeway and high-speed divided highway network, for example the Tonkin Hwy Corridor project, the Tonkin Hwy Extension project, relevant EastLink WA projects and the Kwinana Fwy upgrade between Roe Hwy and Safety Bay Rd. Barrier selection and design should consider motorcyclist safety, including the use of motorcycle underrun protection where warranted.

Most sections of the freeway and high-speed divided highway network currently have an AusRAP star rating of 3-stars.[8] Installing continuous barriers could support progression towards 4-star outcomes, as demonstrated by the newer northern section of Tonkin Hwy between Ellenbrook and Muchea, where there are extensive wire-rope barriers in place.

All the freeways and highways identified for continuous safety barriers are less than 100km long, making network-wide completion a practical and achievable investment.

By completing continuous median and roadside barrier systems on freeways and high-speed divided highways, the WA Government can make some of the state's most important transport corridors safer and more forgiving, and have a direct impact on reducing deaths and serious injuries on WA roads.

RAC calls on the WA Government to:

Fund a dedicated safety barrier completion program to audit remaining barrier gaps on a priority basis, develop a delivery timeline, and progressively install continuous roadside and median safety barriers on WA's freeways and high-speed divided highways, with a particular focus on Kwinana Fwy, Mitchell Fwy, Tonkin Hwy and Forrest Hwy.



2. Implementing safer speeds across local government road networks

Many local government roads have not been assessed against contemporary speed zoning principles that prioritise harm minimisation and consider the road's function, surrounding land use and safety environment. Since 2022, the Shire of Augusta Margaret River, Main Roads WA and RAC have been undertaking the Safer Speeds Trial Project to evaluate and strategically reduce speed limits on local government roads, with a focus on minimising the severity of crashes and road trauma.

While it is recognised that speed limit reductions can be polarising within the community, the trial has demonstrated a willingness on the part of local government to critically assess existing speed environments and implement network-wide changes guided by clear road safety principles. The project has shown that evidence-based speed management can be applied holistically while balancing broader community considerations.

Other local governments are also interested in implementing safer speeds at scale. However, network-wide speed limit reviews require dedicated staffing and funding, particularly to assess and classify roads, prepare applications and install new signage.

This submission outlines a proposal to establish a $10 million per year program supporting local governments in undertaking network-wide speed limit reviews and implementing safer speed limits.



The challenge:

- Impact speed is arguably the most influential factor determining crash outcomes. Even the safest vehicles, road designs and the presence of proven road safety treatments are sometimes not enough to save lives and prevent the life-changing injuries that occur from crashes at higher speeds. It's not feasible to wait for the billions in funding that would be required to upgrade local government roads to make them safer for the speeds drivers currently travel at.
- The state road safety strategy 2021-2030: *Driving Change* identifies safe travel speeds as a core pillar of reducing road trauma (and the targets are largely predicated on speed limit reductions), yet progress has been modest because speed limit changes continue to be assessed largely on a case-by-case basis, when an application is made by a local government to Main Roads WA.
- Under WA's 2024-2026 road safety action plan, Main Roads WA is reviewing and updating its speed zoning policy to ensure it is aligned with best practice. The updated policy will have new guiding principles and processes that will influence speed zoning decisions towards safer and more appropriate speed limits. The policy seeks to ensure that speed limits are applied appropriately and consistently across the state, but there is currently no mechanism to either require or facilitate the regular review of speed limits on local government roads.
- WA's 139 local governments manage more than 42,000km of sealed roads[9], yet few have the resources required to undertake network-wide reviews and implement new speed limits where warranted, especially if they are required to pay for signage. This is a particular challenge for regional shires, which have a narrower rates base, fewer staff and a larger road network than metropolitan councils.
- The principal barrier is not identifying appropriate speed limits for different road classifications as this is covered in the speed zoning policy. It is resourcing local governments to undertake network-wide assessments to classify all of their roads and fund the signage changes needed to implement the appropriate speed limits.
- Without a dedicated implementation pathway, safer speed reform will continue to rely on individual local governments having the capacity and funding to initiate reviews, prepare applications and install signage, resulting in slow and inconsistent progress across the state.



The opportunity:

Since June 2022, the Shire of Augusta Margaret River and RAC, with support from Main Roads WA, have been working on a Safer Speeds Trial Project (the Trial)[10], to test a new approach to assessing speed limits on local government roads within the Trial area, focusing on harm minimisation and analysing roads in a holistic, network-wide way. It is anticipated that the Trial will inspire and support other local governments to take a more holistic approach to facilitating safer speeds on their networks.

The design of the Trial has involved reviewing network data including traffic, speed, crash history, movement and place, and community nominations alongside a literature review of best practice speed limit setting. A set of principles for speed zoning, prioritising harm minimisation, were agreed to and helped guide the proposed speed limit reductions.

Road type	Old speed limit	New speed limit
Town centres	40-50km/h	40km/h (area wide)
Residential streets	50km/h	40km/h (area wide)
Urban major roads	60-70km/h	50-60km/h
Peri-urban residential roads	70km/h or 110km/h (open default)	60km/h (area wide)
Sealed rural undivided roads	70-110km/h (open default)	70-80km/h

Table 1. Speed limit principles

The Trial commenced in May 2025, with new speed limit signs progressively installed over a four-month period on approximately 550 roads. Comprehensive reviews will take place 12 months after the Trial commences and then after three years to help understand the impacts of the Trial and identify where adjustments may be required. The 12-month review is taking place during 2026, involving collection and analysis of tube count data, TomTom data and community feedback.

Early learnings from the Trial have highlighted that network-wide assessment and implementation of new speeds and speed limit signage must be sufficiently resourced, both in terms of finances and staffing. While implementation costs are not insignificant, particularly for regional local governments, they are modest compared with many other state funded road infrastructure and road safety investments.

Interest in network-wide speed limit reviews extends beyond the Shire of Augusta Margaret River. The Perth Inner City Group's Go40 initiative demonstrates that metropolitan local governments are also seeking to implement safer speeds at scale.[11] However, even relatively well-resourced councils have required external funding support for implementation, highlighting the need for a dedicated statewide program.

The Victorian Government's Safe Local Roads and Streets Program demonstrates that a state road safety program can fund the planning and implementation of speed limit changes across broad local government areas.

The program provides dedicated state funding to local governments to deliver road safety improvements on council-managed roads, including speed limit reductions.[12] It was designed in recognition that local governments often lack the resources to deliver road safety interventions despite managing the majority of the local road network. The program has been used by several local governments, including Moonee Valley City Council[13], to plan and implement lower speed limits across residential neighbourhoods and activity centres.

There are eight Main Roads WA regions. A $10 million per year program could enable approximately one local government per region (or two in the regions with more local governments) each year to commence a network-wide speed limit review and then implement safer speed limits.

The Safer Speeds Trial has demonstrated a practical model for reviewing and implementing speed limits across a broad local government area. The next step is to create a resourced pathway for other WA councils to apply a similar approach in their local government areas.

RAC calls on the WA Government to:

Establish and resource a $10 million per year Main Roads WA program to support local governments to undertake network-wide speed limit reviews and then implement safer speed limits, including funding for assessment and signage.


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3. Complete the Regional Road Safety Program across state and local government road networks

People travelling on regional WA roads face a substantially higher risk of death than those in metropolitan Perth, with regional deaths and serious injuries fairly evenly split between state-managed roads and local government-managed roads. Much of the network remains unforgiving of mistakes, combining high operating speeds with roadside hazards and limited safety infrastructure.

The Regional Road Safety Program has demonstrated that proven, low-cost treatments can substantially reduce this trauma. Since 2020, around 10,000 kilometres of predominantly state-controlled roads have been upgraded with treatments including sealed shoulders and audible edge and centre lines. Early analysis of 163 projects found a 50 per cent reduction in fatalities and a 35 per cent reduction in serious injuries. A further 8,000 kilometres of high-speed local government roads have been identified for treatment. The WA Government has earmarked an initial $250 million to begin treating these roads, but further co-funding will be required to complete the pipeline. The latest business case estimates that completing the full 8,000 kilometres would prevent more than 750 deaths and serious injuries over 30 years.

RAC calls on the WA Government to complete the Regional Road Safety Program across the remaining regional state road network and work with the Australian Government to co-fund safety treatments across the full 8,000 kilometres of identified local government roads. This would extend the program's benefits equitably across regional state and local government road networks and systematically reduce risk on regional roads.



The challenge:

- People travelling on regional WA roads face a much higher risk of being killed in a crash than those travelling in metropolitan Perth. Regional WA has a fatality rate of 18.1 road deaths per 100,000 population[14], three times the WA average of 6.0 and nearly four times the national average of 4.8.[15]
- More than 500 people have been killed and over 2,500 seriously injured on WA's regional roads over the past five years.[16] Factors such as higher operating speeds, longer emergency response and transport times, and reduced access to specialised trauma and rehabilitation services can increase the social and economic costs associated with regional crashes. The cost assigned by Main Roads WA to a serious crash in regional WA is significantly higher than in the metro area.[17]
- Much of the regional road network is unforgiving of mistakes, with high-speed two-way traffic, roadside hazards such as trees and a lack of safety features.
- 44 per cent of deaths and serious injuries in regional WA occur on local government managed roads (accounting for more than 270 deaths and serious injuries each year)[18], meaning that both state and local roads need to be improved to deliver road safety targets.
- Infrastructure Australia has identified poor quality parts of Australia's regional road network[19] and more specifically single vehicle, run-off road crashes in WA[20], as issues of national significance.



The opportunity:

The Regional Road Safety Program (RRSP) is a landmark WA Government initiative delivering effective, low-cost safety treatments such as sealing shoulders, installing audible edge lines, medians and/or centre lines. To date, around 10,000km of (mostly state-controlled) regional roads have been upgraded since the program was established in 2020.[21]

Early evidence indicates that the RRSP is significantly reducing regional road trauma.[22] Crash reduction analysis (to December 2022), which was undertaken across 163 Regional Road Safety Program projects, indicated a 50 per cent reduction in fatalities and a 35 per cent reduction in serious injuries when compared to the five years prior.

RAC is a strong supporter of the RRSP and it is critical the program is rolled out in full so that the safety benefits are realised across the whole WA regional network. In addition to around 14,400km of state-controlled regional roads[23], approximately 8,000km of local government managed regional and peri-urban roads have been identified for safety treatments.

In 2022, RAC, WALGA and Main Roads WA jointly supported development of a business case identifying approximately 8,000km of high-speed sealed local government roads suitable for low-cost safety treatments. In 2025, Main Roads WA updated the business case so that: the treatment unit rates matched current market conditions and delivery mechanisms; and so that proposed treatments maximised the crash reduction benefits by applying shoulder sealing and audible edge and centre lines on all roads, ensuring a more comprehensive, uniform and equitable application of safety treatments. The updated business case estimates that upgrading the 8,000km of local government roads would prevent more than 750 deaths and serious injuries over a 30-year lifespan.

The WA Government announced in the 2025-26 State Budget that $250 million will be allocated over five years to expand the RRSP to local roads across the State, including a $125 million investment from the WA Government.[24] The first two tranches of the expanded program have commenced – with $73 million invested across 51 projects, spanning approximately 860km.[25] RAC has welcomed the funding for this first stage of local roads investment. However, to reach the total projected reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI), the WA and Australian Governments must continue to co-fund these safety treatments across all 8,000km of local government roads.

Funding these programs will assist with the delivery of *Driving Change: A Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030 (Driving Change)* and the *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30*, which have both identified making regional roads safer a priority to reduce road trauma. It would also give practical effect to the WA Government's priority to deliver quality infrastructure, including roads, no matter where people live.[26] In addition, the programs respond to Infrastructure Australia's previous priority listing: *Regional Road Network Safety Improvements*, and strongly align with other past and current priority listings, including *Regional and Rural WA Road Network Safety Improvements*, and *Road Access Improvements to Remote WA Communities*.

The RRSP is an established, evidence-backed program with demonstrated safety benefits, an identified remaining pipeline and a clear opportunity to extend proven low-cost safety treatments equitably across regional state and local government road networks.

RAC calls on the WA Government to:

- Continue funding the Regional Road Safety Program across the remaining regional state road network.
- Advocate for the Australian Government to match the WA Government's $125m commitment to the first phase of the Regional Road Safety Program Local Roads package, enabling low-cost safety treatments across more than 1,400km of high speed sealed local government roads.
- Commit to a long-term co-funding agreement with the Australian Government to progressively deliver low-cost safety treatments to the full 8,000km of high speed sealed local government roads.



4. Upscale investment for a high-quality active transport network

Western Australia is experiencing growing demand for safe and connected active transport infrastructure as more people choose to walk and ride for everyday travel. This trend is being driven by a range of factors, including rising fuel prices, broader cost-of-living pressures and increasing demand for convenient and affordable transport alternatives.

Daily travel to school represents one of the most significant transport movements in Western Australia. As such, safe, direct and accessible walking and cycling routes can help reduce traffic congestion, improve road safety, support healthier lifestyles and support lifelong active travel habits.

At the same time, significant WA Government investment in public transport infrastructure, and the associated development of station precincts across the metropolitan area, is expected to further increase active transport use and pedestrian activity. As more people walk and ride to access transport hubs, schools and other local destinations, the need for a safe and connected active transport network will continue to grow.

However, large sections of the Long Term Cycle Network remain incomplete or below standard, particularly within school catchments. There is a clear need for targeted investment to accelerate delivery of active transport infrastructure and provide local governments with the resources required to complete missing network links.

Improvements such as wider shared paths, separated facilities, safer road crossings and upgraded intersection treatments will help create safer routes to school, support active travel uptake more broadly, leading to improved safety outcomes for all road users.



The challenge:

- Across Australia, land transport crashes are one of the leading causes of death for children aged 1-14.[27] Perth based research shows that approximately one third of crashes involving children and adolescents walking or cycling occurred during school zone hours, with the highest proportion of crashes occurring in postcodes with the highest rates of disadvantage.[28] Crashes within 500m of the closest school were more likely to occur during school zone operating hours.
- RAC member sentiments point to high levels of dissatisfaction with active transport infrastructure where fear of sharing the roads with motorists is the main barrier to cycling more often.[29]
- Currently, only 31 per cent of the 5,568km Long Term Cycle Network (LTCN) is constructed to an adequate standard[30] with hundreds of kilometres yet to be constructed in regional WA. Within the 1km catchment of all primary schools in the Perth metropolitan region, over half of this network is either non-existent, inadequate or needing significant improvement.
- Underinvestment in active transport is a major barrier to creating an efficient and resilient transport network.[31] The State Government's annual investment in active transport infrastructure is around 1.7 per cent of the 2024-25 combined capital expenditure of WA's transport agencies[32], lagging by 8.3 per cent when compared to internationally recommended levels.[33]
- While the WA Government invested an annual average of $83m between 2017 and 2026[34] less than 10 per cent of this went directly to Local Governments[35], despite their responsibility for over three quarters of the cycle network.[36] Almost 4,000kms of the LTCN is yet to be constructed to an adequate standard, yet the value of Western Australian Bicycle Network (WABN) Grants Program would only support around 4kms of high-quality shared path to be constructed across the Perth metropolitan region each year.
- Under the current grant framework, LTCN projects require a higher local government contribution ($1:$1)[37] than road-based projects ($2:$1)[38] making active transport infrastructure less attractive to deliver.
- Furthermore, many Local Governments are excluded from applying for infrastructure funding. As of 2024, the WABN Grant Program has a narrow eligibility criterion where the funding stream for the Perth and Peel LTCN is largely only available for primary and secondary routes within 2km of METRONET stations.



The opportunity:

Daily travel to school represents one of the most significant transport movements, accounting for around one quarter of all peak hour vehicle trips.[39] The concentration of traffic during school travel times reinforces the need for safe, direct and accessible walking, wheeling and cycling routes that support children to travel confidently. Preventing harm to our most vulnerable road users is a core responsibility across all levels of government.

The economic, health, and climate benefits generated by high quality active transport networks typically outweigh the initial investment within as little as two years.[40] Modelling from New South Wales estimates each extra kilometre walked adds $5.24 of value and cycling adds up to $2.97, accounting for the economic benefits derived from better physical and mental health over a lifetime, cleaner air, and fewer road injuries.[41]

Numerous cities and countries are scaling up investment to deliver a high-quality active transport network;

- Ireland committed 20 per cent of the transport capital budget to walking and cycling per year for five years in 2020, and in 2026, increased the funding to €360 million ($590 million AUD) to be spent in 2026 alone.[42]
- Scotland allocated 10 per cent of the transport budget to active travel in 2024–25.[43]
- Santiago (Chile)[44], Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)[45], Singapore [46], and Abu Dhabi (UAE)[47] have also drastically scaled up investment.

Some cities have quickly seen the return on investment; Paris invested €250 million ($403 million AUD) from 2021–2026 to make all streets cyclable by 2026[48] and saw cycling traffic rise by 240% between 2018 and 2023[49], now surpassing car trips for trips from the outskirts to the centre[50]; and the City of London reported a 57 per cent increase in cycling volumes between 2022 and 2024[51], increasing the length of their bike network from 90km in 2016 to 450kms in 2025.[52]

RAC members strongly support investment in off-road and shared path infrastructure to make local streets safer for cycling[53], echoed by the WA Government's Ride Safe Report (Recommendation 9) which highlighted the criticality of providing safe, separated and dedicated infrastructure to reduce conflict and protect riders and pedestrians.[54]

As infrastructure is one of the most influential determinants of active travel uptake[55], scaling up investment from 1.7 per cent to 10 per cent of the transport capital budget is essential to unlock latent demand and support a meaningful shift towards walking and riding.

RAC acknowledges that a significant increase in transport capital funding for active transport cannot be justified without clearly defined projects and programs to direct investment toward. The development of the WA Active Travel Strategy – Walk, Wheel, Ride, Thrive presents an important opportunity to establish this framework, providing a coordinated and strategic approach to walking, wheeling and riding across Western Australia. The Strategy is expected to identify priorities for improving the State's active transport network and provide a pipeline of initiatives capable of delivering measurable safety, mobility and connectivity outcomes. Developed with input from stakeholders including the Bike Riding Reference Group, of which RAC is a member, the Strategy will help identify where targeted investment can achieve the greatest benefit.

As part of this effort, The WA Bicycle Network Plan highlights the importance of connecting schools and stations to active transport.[56] Given that school catchments account for much of the network, targeted investment in these areas would deliver high-impact results for the broader community. High-quality infrastructure would help reduce road trauma, support delivery of Recommendation 9 of the Ride Safe Report, reduce short vehicle trips, and foster lifelong active travel habits from an early age.

RAC calls on the WA Government to:

- As part of a longer term commitment to scale up the proportion of the transport capital budget allocated to active transport from 1.7 per cent to 10 per cent over ten years, allocate $17 million in 2027-28 to complete the Long Term Cycle Network within six primary school catchments (including at least one regional). Schools should be prioritised in areas of the highest socio-economic disadvantage as part of a longer term increase in investment in school cycle networks.
- Increase available funding for Local Governments to incentivise completion of the LTCN by amending the structure of the WABN Grants Program so that for each dollar the local government spends, the WA Government contributes $3 rather than $1.



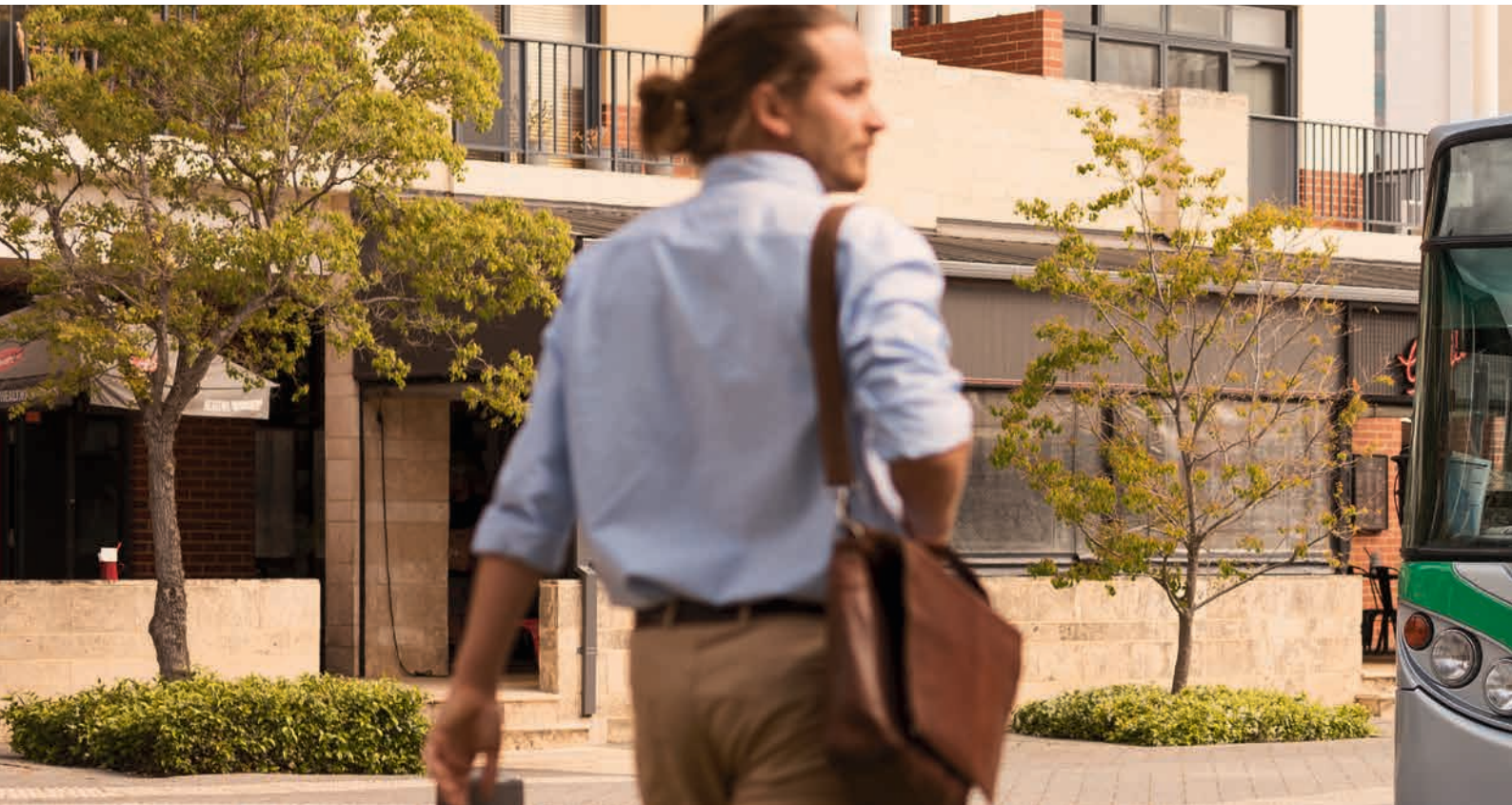
5. Capitalise on Perth's high-frequency bus network

Cost of living pressures and rising fuel prices are increasingly driving Western Australians to seek more affordable transport options. An RAC survey conducted in May 2026, during the peak of the fuel price surge, found that one in four respondents had increased their use of public transport as a way to manage household transport costs. The WA Government's introduction of the 'Go Anywhere' flat fare system has strengthened the affordability and attractiveness of public transport, providing a low-cost alternative for households facing financial pressures.

Buses, particularly high-frequency routes such as the 900-series services, play a vital role in connecting main road corridors to Perth's rail network and supporting seamless travel across the metropolitan area. In addition to reducing congestion and emissions by encouraging fewer private vehicle trips, investment in faster, more reliable bus services would deliver tangible cost-of-living relief for Western Australian families.

Improving the efficiency of key bus corridors through targeted infrastructure and service upgrades would make public transport a more attractive and reliable alternative to private vehicle use while maximising the value of existing transport investments.

This submission proposes targeted upgrades to key metropolitan bus routes to improve service reliability, reduce travel times and support increased public transport patronage across Perth.



The challenge:

- WA's population is projected to grow by nearly 32 per cent between 2021 and 2036.[57] Tens of thousands of new residents are expected along high volume corridors. A business-as-usual approach to the provision of transport options will increase traffic volumes and congestion unless viable alternatives are provided.
- With Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA) calculating the 2024-25 cost of congestion in Perth metro to be $2.9b[58] traffic congestion affecting thousands of daily bus users imposes a significant economic burden.
- Mixing buses with general traffic impacts their reliability, efficiency and attractiveness as a transport mode, and for seven years running, RAC Members have nominated the time it takes to get to their destination with public transport as one of their top three barriers to using it more often.[59]
- Public transport patronage continues to reach record levels, placing increasing pressure on the broader transport network, including access to rail stations. Investment in bus priority can improve the attractiveness of feeder and cross-suburban services, helping more people access public transport without relying on station parking while making better use of existing transport infrastructure.[60]
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), while desirable for key corridors, faces barriers such as high costs, space constraints, network and fleet interoperability challenges and long delivery timelines. This underscores the need for bus priority improvements to improve speed, reliability and capacity on high demand corridors. Failure to provide bus priority ahead of future mid-tier public transport investment risks worsening travel times, declining service reliability and missed opportunities to encourage a shift towards public transport.
- While growth-area planning increasingly relies on public transport to support access to employment, housing and activity centres, funding arrangements do not consistently support the early delivery of high-quality bus infrastructure and services. Without a dedicated growth-area public transport fund, strategically important corridors such as the proposed Alkimos-Eglinton high frequency transit corridor risk defaulting to standard bus service levels, limiting patronage potential and locking in car dependency in rapidly developing areas from the outset.



The opportunity:

While recent State investment has focused on expanding Perth's rail network, buses remain a heavy mover, typically supporting about half of all public transport trips. In 2025-26, buses carried nearly 13 million more boardings than trains.[61] The 900-series bus routes perform a unique role within Perth's transport network, contributing towards the formation of a mid-tier service. Predominantly serving the Central Sub-Region, they operate at higher frequencies and longer hours than standard services, they also run along major corridors, connecting key destinations unable to be covered by the rail network (such as QEII and UWA) and importantly, connect the stations themselves. These 14 routes support some of Perth's highest patronage levels (particularly the 950 and 960 routes), delivering superior cost efficiencies per boarding.

RAC's 2026 Public Transport Member Priorities Tracker survey found that 44 per cent of members would be more likely to use public transport if additional bus priority measures were introduced, and 60 per cent supported better connections to activity centres and destinations beyond Perth City Centre.[62]

Providing more buses and investing in bus priority infrastructure (e.g. Intelligent Transport Systems, and 24 hour bus lanes) along high demand routes such as the 900 series is a strategic opportunity to attract and transport a higher volume of passengers, more reliably and faster than standard buses. Key benefits include:

- **Reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on roads:** Local and international research demonstrates that travelling by bus is significantly safer than private vehicles.[63] Bus priority infrastructure such as bus lanes can further improve corridor safety outcomes[64, 65] by enforcing a slower on-road environment; reducing the number of vehicles on the road; and reducing per person exposure.
- **Improving access to jobs, housing and healthcare:** Bus priority improves the speed and reliability of public transport, two of the key barriers to uptake. It also supports economic participation, social inclusion and more sustainable urban growth, particularly in rapidly developing areas where congestion and car dependency can limit access to opportunity.
- **Optimisation of road space:** Each bus is capable of replacing up to 50 cars while using just 6 per cent of the road space.[66] PTA data shared with RAC from 2026 shows that on Beaufort Street where some bus priority measures exist, buses account for only 8 per cent of total vehicle movements during the peak but carry almost two-thirds of people moving along the corridor.
- **Return on investment:** Modelling shows that investing in efficient and sustainable transport modes delivers greater long-term economic and social returns than expanding car and rail infrastructure[67] thanks to lower operating costs per boarding and system-wide benefits for all road users.[68]
- **Progressing towards a mid-tier transport system:** Bus priority measures are a critical step in elevating Perth's public transport network to a mid-tier system, bridging the gap between local buses and high-capacity rail. Improvements to travel time reliability supports mode shift, increases corridor efficiency, and lays the groundwork for scalable, cost-effective upgrades to meet growing demand.

In 2017, the Office of the Auditor General's Planning and Management of Bus Services report highlighted that over 20 corridors needed significant improvements to bus priority measures to support the high frequency bus series, and in 2019 PTA's Major Corridor Review outlined 24 potential high frequency corridors and 10 under-performing high frequency routes which would generate the highest return on investment if transitioned to bus priority.

While Perth has some examples of good bus priority infrastructure, a larger program is now needed to accelerate improvement and reliability of the high frequency series and support the rollout of additional bus priority measures in line with strategic transport portfolio objectives for connectivity, resilience, safety and sustainability.[69] A key advantage of bus priority is that many treatments can be delivered using existing road reserves and traffic management systems and therefore significantly faster than major transport infrastructure projects. Traffic signal priority, queue-jump facilities, lane reallocation and operational improvements can begin delivering travel-time and reliability benefits within a relatively short timeframe, while larger corridor upgrades can be staged over several years. This allows the community to realise benefits progressively rather than waiting for completion of a major capital project.

Considering the potential for leveraging existing infrastructure investment in certain areas, the forecast levels of population growth along existing high frequency bus catchments and in developing areas, and the need for completing routes in line with PTA's desire for a "whole of corridor approach", RAC has identified some key opportunities over the short to medium term.

RAC calls on the WA Government to:

- Commit to a program of works that delivers 'whole of corridor' bus priority treatments along the 900 series high-frequency bus routes, including the provision of more buses, corresponding pedestrian connectivity, and prioritisation of bus priority measures along Canning Highway, Beaufort Street and Wanneroo Road South. In particular:
  - Bus priority measures on Canning Highway east and west of Canning Bridge Station to support the 910 bus route, ongoing population growth, and in anticipation of area wide development including the committed investment into the Canning Bridge Bus Interchange and potential future ferry terminal.
  - Continuation of existing bus priority treatments north along Beaufort Street between Salisbury Street to Russell Street in support of the 950 bus route.
  - Wanneroo Road corridor:
    - Continuation of existing bus priority along Charles Street (north of Vincent Street to Nollamara Shopping Centre) connecting to services from Scarborough Beach Road and providing access to ECU City (supporting the 990 bus route)
    - Implementation of bus priority measures along Wanneroo Road (south) to connect with the Charles Street section, offset demand along the Mitchell Freeway and support the 970 bus route.
- Establish a dedicated growth-area public transport fund to enable the early delivery of bus priority infrastructure and high-frequency services in developing communities. By supporting corridors such as the proposed Alkimos-Eglinton high-frequency transit corridor, the fund would improve access to employment, housing and activity centres, support patronage growth and reduce long-term car dependency in line with policy aspirations.



6. Scaling up EV charging infrastructure and the supply of affordable used EVs

WA is at an important juncture in its EV transition. EV affordability has improved significantly in recent years, driven by increased competition and a broader range of models entering the Australian market. At the same time, recent fuel price volatility has highlighted the substantial savings households can achieve by switching to an EV. With EV registrations in WA increasing by 66 per cent in the last financial year[71], there is a clear opportunity to accelerate uptake by addressing the barriers that continue to prevent many households and businesses from making the transition.

The Zero Emission Vehicle Rebate played an important role in supporting early market growth and encouraging consumer adoption. As the market has matured, the policy focus should now shift towards targeted initiatives that support mass-market uptake and deliver the greatest value for public investment. RAC-commissioned modelling shows the most cost-effective measures are those that directly address the two key barriers to EV adoption: concerns about charging availability and access to affordable EV ownership.

Targeted initiatives that expand charging infrastructure, strengthen charging confidence and increase the supply of affordable second-hand EVs, would help accelerate adoption across a broader segment of the community. In doing so, they would enhance energy security, reduce transport costs for households and businesses, and support the State Government's priorities of easing cost-of-living pressures, supporting small and medium-sized businesses, and advancing decarbonisation objectives.



The challenge:

- WA continues to face fuel security risks due to its dependence on imported transport fuels and exposure to global supply chain disruptions, leaving households vulnerable to fuel price volatility and higher cost-of-living pressures.
- While WA is generally considered to have good air quality, pollution exposure remains a significant public health burden. People living, working and attending school near busy roads will experience higher concentrations of traffic-related air pollution. This is particularly important given that it is estimated that over a million Western Australians are vulnerable to the health impacts of air pollution, including children, older adults and people with existing health conditions.[72] The RAC Air Health Monitor found that annual average NO_2 concentrations at main roads and highway monitoring locations in Perth were 20 per cent higher than the network average, while elevated NO_2 concentrations remained relatively frequent across school locations during peak traffic hours.[73]
- Traffic-related air pollution (NO2 and PM2.5) is estimated to contribute to up to 3,000 premature deaths nationally each year[74] and places additional pressure on the health system.
- As well as people's health, our environment is also impacted, a problem that is only worsening. Passenger vehicle CO_2 emissions in WA have increased by 13 per cent since 2020.[75]
- According to members, range anxiety and access to public charging infrastructure are two of the top five barriers to purchasing a battery electric vehicle (BEV) in WA.[76] Reliable and accessible public charging infrastructure remains a critical enabler of EV uptake, particularly for households without access to home charging, including apartment residents and those without off-street parking. A key challenge is that EV uptake and charging infrastructure deployment are interdependent: consumers are less likely to purchase EVs without confidence that charging is available when needed, while investors are less likely to deploy charging infrastructure until EV numbers and charger utilisation increase.[77]
- Australia still has a high number of EVs per public charging point compared with other countries, at 40 per public charging point (compared with between 10 and 30 in most International Energy Agency member countries), leading to long wait times. Australia has 1.1kW of public charging per EV, which is again low compared to other countries.[78]
- The cost of a BEV remains a significant barrier to adoption by both the community and businesses in WA.[79] Many households remain unable to access the lower fuel and maintenance costs associated with EV ownership because of the high upfront purchase price of new vehicles. Increasing the supply of affordable second-hand EVs will be critical to broadening access to EV ownership and ensuring more households can benefit from lower running costs.

The opportunity:

As the EV market matures, policy support should focus on addressing the barriers that continue to constrain uptake and delivering the greatest value for public investment. Building on the foundations established through the Electric Vehicle Strategy for WA, targeted measures that expand charging infrastructure and improve access to affordable EVs can help accelerate adoption and maximise the economic, environmental and community benefits of transport electrification.

In 2026, RAC commissioned Veitch Lister Consulting (VLC) to identify the initiatives most likely to accelerate EV uptake in WA and inform future policy priorities.[80] VLC compared a range of initiatives designed to address key barriers to EV uptake in WA, including expanding EV infrastructure, corporate fleet rebates, free battery health check, free electricity credits, and a discount on registration fees. The modelling found that only three initiatives were cost effective, where one dollar of public investment abates at least one dollar of lifecycle CO_2.

Initiative (and timeframe modelled)	What	Why	Modelled Annual cost (first year)	Climate benefit cost ratio	Lifecycle CO_2 abated
EV infrastructure 2027-2040	Public charging infrastructure is expanded to achieve charging convenience equivalent to internal combustion vehicle refuelling, removing charging anxiety as a barrier to EV uptake.	**Best for delivering the highest sustained EV uplift across all market segments while improving charging confidence.** Addresses range anxiety as a key barrier to EV uptake.	$100m	1	**8.4 Mt** **Greatest EV uptake and over four times the emissions reduction of any other initiative modelled**
Corporate fleet rebate 2027-2030	Modelled as a $5,000 corporate fleet-wide rebate per BEV purchase, excluding sole traders.	**Best for growing the future supply of affordable used EVs.** A targeted fleet rebate can accelerate business uptake now and increase the supply of more affordable used BEVs later, improving access for lower-income households that are unlikely or unable to buy new.	$40m	1	**1.9 Mt**
Free battery health checks 2027-2030	Subsidised battery health testing at $200 per test, for the purchase of used EVs. First year funding includes support for training required for battery testing to meet EV demand.	**Addresses battery life concerns.** Battery life concerns are the biggest barrier to EV purchases in WA.	$20m first year (approx. $3m per year thereafter)	1.4	**0.96 Mt**

Overall, expanded public charging infrastructure delivered the largest lifecycle emissions reduction, abating an estimated 8.4 million tonnes of CO_2 between 2027 and 2061, with a benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 1. This means the estimated climate benefits were equivalent to the cost of the initiative. For the scenario, VLC examined the level of public charging infrastructure required to remove range anxiety as a barrier to BEV uptake in WA. The modelling found this would require an initial investment of approximately $100 million in 2027, followed by ongoing investment to maintain charging availability as EV uptake grows, with a total cumulative investment reaching around $1.3 billion by 2040.

In practice, government funding need only play a part in the EV infrastructure rollout, with private investment able to play a leading role in commercially viable locations. Targeted public investment is most important where commercial returns are insufficient, particularly in regional and remote areas and along strategic transport corridors. In these locations, reducing the average distance between chargers to 100km would decrease the risk of EV drivers becoming stranded (if, for example, drivers must drive further because a charger is out of order).

The modelling findings are consistent with broader market trends. EV charger deployment is not keeping pace with EV uptake. Public charging infrastructure deployment grew by 19 per cent in 2025 nationally, but this was substantially outpaced by a 53 per cent increase in EV sales and remains below the level required to support projected EV uptake under the expected (Australian Energy Market Operator Step Change) scenario.[82] Demand for EV charging infrastructure is expected to increase significantly over the coming decade, with passenger EVs projected to account for 10 per cent of the national vehicle fleet and 53 per cent of new vehicle sales by 2030.[83] For WA's Wholesale Electricity Market (WEM), the EV fleet share is projected to be 8 per cent by 2030 (210,000 EVs of all vehicle types)[84], reinforcing the need to ensure charging infrastructure deployment keeps pace with anticipated growth in the EV fleet.

At the national level, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) estimates Australia will require around 78,000 public charging points by 2030 (under the Step Change scenario), this is approximately eight times current levels needed within five years, and will align Australia's charger availability with similar countries such as Canada and the United States.[85] Similarly, Deloitte modelling suggests an eight-fold increase on 2023 levels of public charging capacity will be needed by 2033. This represents around 31,500 new public EV chargers nationally, with approximately 3,000 new public chargers needed in WA.[86]

A key learning from operating the RAC Electric Highway® and member feedback is that charger reliability is fundamental to public confidence in EV charging infrastructure. Even a well-located charger provides little value if drivers cannot rely on it being operational when needed. Supporting amenities such as lighting, CCTV, seating, shelters, and toilets further improve comfort and safety while charging, particularly in regional and remote locations where charging stops often double as driver rest stops. To support confidence in the public charging network, the WA Government should align with Federal Government minimum operating standards including requiring 98 per cent annual charger uptime for publicly funded charging infrastructure.[87]

Expanding charging infrastructure addresses range anxiety, but improving access to affordable EVs is also critical, particularly during a cost-of-living crisis. A corporate fleet rebate would reduce purchase costs for businesses and increase the supply of affordable used EVs for households. As fleet vehicles enter the second-hand market typically within a few years[88], more households can access the lower fuel and maintenance costs of EV ownership.

The VLC modelling noted above identified a corporate fleet rebate as another effective investment, with a BCR of 1.0 and abating 1.9 million tonnes of CO2 from 2027-2061. The rebate was priced at $5,000 to businesses per BEV purchase. The scenario required annual government expenditure of approximately $40 million in 2027 increasing to $80 million by 2030, resulting in a cumulative investment of around $250 million by the incentive end date of 2030. Corporate rebate funding should also support the installation of workplace chargers, recognising that workplace charging can be a significant additional cost for businesses purchasing or leasing EVs.[89]

The third cost-effective incentive modelled by VLC was free battery health checks between 2027 and 2030, which was estimated to deliver 0.9 million tonnes of CO_2 abatement. While cost effective, RAC does not recommend this initiative in isolation as it is estimated to deliver significantly lower emissions reductions and EV uptake benefits than expanded charging infrastructure and corporate fleet rebates.

Importantly, VLC modelling found that expanded charging infrastructure and fleet rebates delivered the strongest uplift in BEV ownership among lower-income and regional households. Together, these initiatives can improve access to affordable EV ownership, reduce household transport costs, strengthen fuel security and support emissions reductions across WA. These benefits are even larger under higher fuel prices. The modelling also projected that the two initiatives would deliver the largest reductions in fuel consumption, reducing demand for imported transport fuels by approximately 584 million litres for the expanded infrastructure scenario (2027-2040) and 113 million litres for the corporate rebate scenario (2027-2030), these initiatives also deliver enduring benefits through ongoing fuel savings beyond the funding period. This reduction in fuel demand would strengthen WA's fuel security by reducing exposure to international fuel market disruptions, improving resilience during periods of fuel supply constraint and complementing broader fuel security measures such as fuel stockholding.

RAC calls on the WA Government to:

- Expand EV charging infrastructure by:
  - Supporting approximately $100 million of public and private investment in EV charging infrastructure in 2027-28, sufficient to double WA's charging network capacity in the short term.
  - Commit to a long-term funding pathway to 2040 for EV charging infrastructure, including through partnership with the Australian Government, to ensure charger deployment and reliability keep pace with EV uptake and future demand in WA.
  - Public charging funding should prioritise the deployment of public charging infrastructure along key transport routes in regional and remote WA that currently fall outside the existing network and are unlikely to attract private investment in the short to medium term. Public investment should aim to reduce the distance between chargers to 100km, link funding to minimum operating standards including uptime targets, and ensure amenities are available.
- Commit to an EV fleet purchase rebate that includes support for workplace chargers to incentivise WA businesses to purchase or lease battery electric vehicles, increasing the future supply of affordable second-hand EVs for households.

RAC is a voice for over 1.3 million Western Australians. Since our foundation in 1905, RAC has existed to be a driving force for a better WA by championing change that will create a safer, sustainable and connected Western Australia.

Purpose

The driving force for a better WA.

Vision

2030: A safer, sustainable and connected future for Western Australians.

Mission

Delivering great member services and experiences, while inspiring positive community change that makes life better in WA.



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