

RAC response to the mid-term review of the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

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Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
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We thank the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts for the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the mid-term review of the *National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030* (NRSS).

About RAC

RAC is a purpose-led member organisation. Since our foundation in 1905, RAC has existed to be a driving force for a Better WA – this is our purpose. We act as a voice for more than 1.3 million members in more than 60 per cent of Western Australian households. We work collaboratively with government, industry, our members and all Western Australians to champion change that will deliver safer, sustainable, and connected communities – this is our 2030 vision:

- **Safe** – We want fewer people killed or seriously injured on our roads;
- **Sustainable** – We want to reduce harmful vehicle emissions for cleaner, healthier air; and
- **Connected** – We want well-planned communities and transport that better connect people and places.

Progress during the first half of the NRSS

RAC observes that progress during the first half of the NRSS has been slow. The NRSS is intended to cover the period from 2021-2030, but it was not released until December 2021 and the first action plan was not released until February 2023. Ideally a national strategy would help to inform and coordinate activities at a state level, but Western Australia's road safety strategy for the decade was released in November 2020, over a year before the NRSS, with its first action plan covering 2021-2023.

The NRSS contains an extensive list of demonstration targets, lag indicators and lead indicators, but these were not properly defined prior to it being released and so work on this continued into the term of the strategy. As a result, meaningful action coordinated at the federal level to improve road safety has been delayed. The most recently released annual progress report (covering 2023) noted many lead indicators where either a proxy measure was being used or data was not available for some or all jurisdictions. It will

be critical that planning occur in collaboration with states and territories for the next road safety strategy early enough to ensure this does not happen again.

The NRSS Action Plan 2023-25 contains some positive actions with the potential to have a significant impact on road safety, including:

- development of a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) on reducing the open road default speed limit;
- delivering Safe System treatments on high to moderate volume roads;
- investigating opportunities to reduce average fleet age in regional communities;
- undertaking a review of the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) process to prioritise vehicle safety features and reduce the time to introduce new ADRs; and
- funding infrastructure and non-infrastructure programs to reduce risks to cyclists, pedestrians and motorcycle riders.

However, there are multiple further steps beyond the existing actions before any of these initiatives start to deliver on their potential. For example, development of a RIS would need to be followed by a legislative change to the Australian Road Rules, which would then need to be implemented through legislative change in each state and territory, followed by extensive community education. The next plan should contain specific actions which build on the above and therefore ensure the intended benefits of these original actions are realised.

Priority areas for future action

RAC has identified three key priorities for additional Australian Government investment to improve road safety. These are summarised below, and additional information is available in RAC's [Federal Budget submission](#).

Low-cost safety treatments on country roads

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 State-controlled regional roads have been upgraded since program was established in 2020. Crash reduction analysis (to December 2022), which was undertaken across 163 RRSP projects, indicated a 50 per cent reduction in fatalities and a 35 per cent reduction in serious injuries when compared to the average of the five years prior. It is critical the program is rolled out in full (around 14,400km), so that the safety benefits are realised across the whole state regional network.

In late 2022, RAC commissioned the National Transport Research Organisation to develop a business case to seek funding to improve the safety of sealed, high speed local government roads in WA. The WA Local Government Association and Main Roads WA were project partners, supporting the project through: a

funding contribution; active participation in the project working group; and a joint commitment to use the project deliverables to improve road safety outcomes. An updated version of the business case has been submitted to Infrastructure Australia and now identifies low-cost safety treatments for approximately 8,000km of high speed sealed local government roads. The WA Government announced in the 2025-26 State Budget that \$250 million in State and Federal funding will be allocated over five years to expand the Regional Road Safety Program to local roads across the State. Modelled to prevent more than 500 deaths and serious injuries over a 30-year period and to reduce regional road trauma in WA, the Australian Government should continue to co-fund these safety treatments across all 8,000km of local government roads.

Network wide speed limit reviews for local government roads

Recognising the importance of speed reforms, the NRSS identifies that 'Speed limit reviews are a key element of the comprehensive network-wide safety planning approach over the decade, especially to support vulnerable road users'.

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), 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, area-wide way, and ultimately create a blueprint for Safer Speeds. 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.

The Trial commenced in May 2025, with new speed limit signs progressively installed over a four-month period on approximately 550 roads. Comprehensive evaluations will take place 12 months after the Trial commences and then after three years. The blueprint will provide a process for an approach to speed limit setting across a wide and varying road network and be able to be replicated for other local government areas. Further, early learnings from the Trial have highlighted that network wide assessment and implementation of new speeds and speed limit signage must be sufficiently resourced.

To support local governments in conjunction with state authorities undertake network reviews and implement safer speeds aligned to the NRSS, the Australian Government should establish a new speed limit signage fund.

Accelerated roll-out of active transport infrastructure

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. While 85 per cent of

members feel comfortable riding along a busy street on a shared path and 75 per cent on a protected on-road bike lane, just 11 per cent would feel comfortable mixing with traffic.

In 2024, the Australian Government committed \$100 million over four years to a new National Active Transport Fund to upgrade and deliver new bicycle and walking paths. Once allocated to each state and territory, this level of funding is insufficient to make a real difference in off-road cycling routes across WA. The \$25 million a year National Active Transport Fund represents just 0.3 per cent of Commonwealth road-related expenditure in 2022-23.

To build the safe infrastructure required to both protect vulnerable road users and deliver substantial mode shift, the Australian Government should increase the proportion of the transport capital budget allocated to the National Active Transport Fund from under 1 per cent to 10 per cent.