

14 February 2020

Joint Select Committee on Road Safety
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretariat,

Joint Select Committee on Road Safety

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comment and feedback in response to the Terms of Reference that the Committee has circulated.

ALGA welcomes the opportunity to provide our submission to the Committee, which is attached to this document. ALGA looks forward to an on-going dialogue and consultation with the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety and its Committee Secretariat, as required.

If there is a need for further information or clarification of ALGA's responses, please feel free to contact Mr Adrian Beresford-Wylie, CEO on 0448 865 653 or Mr Kym Foster, Director Transport Policy on 0404 224 528.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Beresford-Wylie
Chief Executive



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety's Inquiry

In response to the Joint Select Committee on
Road Safety Terms of Reference Inquiry

14 February 2020

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Introduction

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is pleased to provide this submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety in response to the Committee's Inquiry Terms of Reference. ALGA has reviewed the Terms of Reference (TOR) and has focused on a number of key issues to inform ALGA's submission. We have also consulted with and received advice and information from a number of our state and territory local government association members, namely the Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA), Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and the Municipal Association of Victoria. We have relied on them to provide detailed perspectives and authentic examples at the local level. As a consequence, the advocacy priorities in this submission collectively provide integrated and considered responses to the issues raised in the TOR.

Local Government is responsible for managing about 75% of Australia's roads by length (an estimated 643,000 km) although many of these roads are lightly trafficked compared with state arterial roads and major national highways and the traffic task on local roads is therefore not directly proportional to road length. Roads are the most significant asset class for Local Government which manages around 33% of Australia's public non-financial infrastructure with just 3.4% of the nation's tax revenue.

This substantial mismatch between asset responsibility and revenue capacity was highlighted in the report of the 2018 Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy undertaken by Jeremy Woolley and John Crozier, and all jurisdictions accept that local government lacks the resources it needs to address its road safety challenges and noted in the communique of the August 2019 meeting of the Transport and Infrastructure Ministerial Council, all jurisdictions agreed to work with local governments to improve engagement and resourcing for road safety.

The ALGA supports the Select Committee in its work and will address those elements of the Committee's Terms of reference which are of most importance to local governments.

Responses to the Committee's Terms of Reference

(a) The effectiveness of existing road safety support services and programs, including opportunities to integrate Safe System principles into health, education, industry and transport policy

The lack of success in the outcomes of the 2011-20 Road Safety Strategy indicates that the existing road safety support services and program are not as effective as they could be, or as effective as stakeholders would wish.

At this point in time, from a Local Government perspective, there is insufficient funding for Black spot programs. There is no clear alignment between strategies at the Federal and State level and there has been a lack of engagement by the Federal Government and a lack of leadership direction.

It is useful to understand what this environment means for local government. Firstly, the capacity of councils needs to be explained both in terms of financial and engineering expertise with around 75% by road length to be managed with access to just 3.4% of the tax base. Many rural councils also have limited access to the technical expertise they require, with limited engineering resources and a growing shortage of engineers going forward. We note that the Woolley-Crozier review in 2018 strongly recommended much greater additional investment in road safety (\$3 billion per annum), some of which could be used to establish a local government road safety fund.

At the operational level, there are competing priorities for road use which can manifest themselves in terms of safety being traded off for productivity and access. There is competing pressure on councils for access to local roads for heavy vehicles from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) and under the new National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy. This trade off was highlighted by the Woolley/Crozier review.

Local Government also needs to manage and consider the community's priorities, as the closest level of government to the community. Access issues at the local level are a major priority for councils but there are many other competing demands from local communities on councils including requirements for youth services, aged services, the provision of sporting, recreation and community facilities, among many others.

Efforts to create authentic partnerships with State Governments

While councils facilitate the challenges highlighted above, several of our state associations, namely Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA), Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) are strengthening their collaborating with several state road safety agencies, working in partnership to move the road safety agenda forward as outlined below.

WALGA's role in road safety

WALGA efforts and initiative is an example of what can be delivered at the State Local Government Association level in collaboration with their state government.

Since 1994, WALGA has delivered the Local Government and Community Road Safety Program, known as RoadWise, in Western Australia. The WA State Government funds the delivery of RoadWise supported by Local Governments with financial and in-kind contributions for local road safety action.

The RoadWise model involves a team of regional and Perth metropolitan-based officers who work to build the capacity of Local Governments and local communities to deliver road safety initiatives aligned to Western Australia's Road Safety Strategy 2008-2020 Towards Zero. 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. Access the WALGA RoadWise website [here](#).

Austrroads reports that Local Governments manage around 82% of the road network in Australia where 52% of all casualty crashes and 40% of all road deaths occur. Through their strategic and operational functions, local governments have significant influence on the design of the road transport system. Recognition of, and a commitment to support local governments in their role, is key to developing important inclusive partnerships to progress the safe system approach towards a future of zero harm from road crashes.

Recommendation 1

Develop authentic partnership arrangements built on a common vision and goals, with appropriate resources (knowledge, funding, skills, data, etc.) that enable local governments to participate fully and effectively in their role to reduce road trauma.

Local Government Association Queensland's (LGAQ) road safety experience

The National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (the strategy) recognises the role of all three levels of government in responding to road safety challenges. However, the LGAQ notes that the 2015-17 Action Plan (action plan) supporting the strategy places a strong emphasis on state and territory roads carrying the highest traffic volumes. The local government sector is largely ignored. As such, the opportunity to work constructively with councils to achieve reductions in Fatal and Severe Injury (FSI) incidents on local roads, where the majority of incidents are occurring, is lost.

While the action plan has taken a state-controlled road focus, LGAQ has commended the initiative shown by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads to partner with councils through the Queensland Roads and Transport Alliance to extend assessment of road safety risk using the Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) to the local government-controlled road network.

The achievement of the ambitious targets established in the strategy requires a coordinated response across the entire road network. As such, the LGAQ suggests the upcoming National Road Safety Action Plan presents a significant opportunity to demonstrate a greater national leadership role while placing strong emphasis on supporting the local government sector. Continued demonstrated leadership is critical in ensuring road safety remains at the forefront of local decision making.

Recommendation 2

Recognition of the ongoing capability and capacity development needs of the local government sector should be elevated as a national priority in future road safety strategies and action plans.

Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) experience

MAV has shared with ALGA some Victorian observations as part of this submission, and has picked up what they see as one of the potentially more promising activities in terms of having an impact on lowering road safety trauma and death; the Complete Streets Victoria design guide.

The MAV and all 79 Victorian councils, are committed supporters of Victoria's Toward Zero road safety policy. In 2019, Victoria saw a 46% increase in fatalities on rural roads and a 21% increase in metropolitan roads compared to 2018 Transport Accident Commission (TAC).

Safe Systems thinking – safer roads, safer road users, safer vehicles, safer speeds – is central to achieving road safety improvement. However, Victorian Councils' is constrained by the impact of rate capping and broader pressures on local government finance.

The TAC has been working with local governments and the MAV on how to best support the sector to contribute to Toward Zero. Based on this work, the MAV believes that any national policy and/or program to support local government work on road safety should be clustered around three outputs:

1. Funding for councils to deliver:

- Capacity building – increase internal capability e.g. fund road safety officers to develop grant proposals, safe system infrastructure design and data analysis, to more effectively support long-term road safety initiatives
- Community engagement – support the unique knowledge of councils to work with their communities to change attitudes/behaviour and create acceptance e.g. speeding, driver distraction and increase awareness of pedestrians and cyclists

2. Increase collaborative activities across all levels of government:

- Partnership approach - better coordinate grant programs and road safety initiatives across government agencies
- Engage the local government sector - as key stakeholders in the development of Federal and State road safety strategies

3. Road infrastructure investment:

- Regional/Rural roads – poor condition of thousands of km of high-speed low-quality roads.

While none of the major output areas are particularly new or ground breaking, they do carry a strong flavour of investing in road safety infrastructure in rural and regional Victoria. A highlight is the investment in flexible barriers for roadsides and centrelines (where possible), as well as tactile edge lines, are featuring heavily in the infrastructure upgrades for rural and regional roads (\$340m over four years). This directly addresses the statistic that almost two-thirds of all rural road fatalities involve crossing the centre line. Any program designed to target fatality reduction has to look toward barriers and tactile edging as a major investment target.

At the design level, the Victorian Department of Transport is leading a project called Complete Streets Victoria (CSV), which is a design guide of urban roads and streets. The CSV framework is one of Victoria's most promising opportunities to improve safety outcomes from policy integration. This work is drawing on similar strategies developed in North American cities such as Toronto, Boston, Chicago and Seattle.

The four major themes coming through DoT's work to date, which includes a significant contribution from metropolitan, regional and rural councils, are movement, place, safety and environment. These themes then feed into a set of broader goals for liveability, economic performance and health and wellbeing.

Recommendation 3

Any program designed to target fatality reduction has to look toward barriers and tactile edging as a major investment target. This also reinforces the importance of collaboration between levels of government and the need and justification of providing infrastructure funding.

(b) The impact of road trauma on the nation, including the importance of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries in remote and regional areas

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

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 in recent years has stalled.

While we reflect on past performance, the disaster that confronts the nation is the 12,000 people who will be killed (on current trends) on Australian roads over the next decade – and the more than 360,000 people who will be hospitalised – at an aggregated cost of over \$300 billion.

Focusing on deaths and the costs is alarming, but it also overlooks the total impact of road crashes on the nation. Sweden's approach to road safety does not focus on calculating the social costs of crashes. Instead, there is an ethical imperative behind the country's 'Vision Zero', where authorities should take responsibility for "making it easy to act correctly in traffic and mistakes should not be punishable by death". This approach takes for granted that no deaths or lifelong injuries should occur as a consequence of workplace accidents.

(c) The possible establishment of a future parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Safety and its functions

ALGA believes there is value in a continuing Committee providing the Commonwealth does continue a stronger leadership role, and provide appropriate resources. The Australian Government is already an active participant in the Austroads programs, although its resource allocation for road transport activities is not directly related.

It is also the case that road transport issues are increasingly becoming nationally significant as data management, tracking technologies, pricing, funding and road safety are developed with smart systems based on a global marketplace. In these circumstances, it is appropriate to establish a future parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Safety reporting to the cabinet minister with responsibility for road safety.

(d) Measures to ensure state, territory and local government road infrastructure investment incorporates the Safe System principles

ALGA believes that measures should be incentives, not punitive punishments. There is a need to recognise that local governments need assistance from their state government colleagues in embedding the safe systems principles, which are known and understood in varying degrees by councils.

Gap in safety performance of road network

System designers and users play a role for successful implementation of the safe system approach on the road network. Local governments have a strategic and operational role as road and planning authorities, fleet managers and in community development and local leadership. Local governments face a number of substantial challenges in managing large geographically diverse and dispersed road networks. These challenges, coupled with capacity constraints (limited funds, staff and training), limit expeditious safe system improvements.

Another challenge is the widening gap in safety performance between rural/remote and urban road networks, and between national/state and local road networks. One major difficulty lies in applying cost effective transformations to a vast road network with low crash densities compared to interventions in urban areas and inter-city routes that have higher populations, traffic volumes and crash densities.

The risk of drivers being involved in a casualty crash can be between 1.5 and 2 times higher on the local road network than on the state road networks. Austroads attributes the higher risk to some features of the local road network, including a lower road standard in general, and behavioural issues associated with the more diverse mix of road users on local roads.

As a part of the effort to achieve the long-term vision of the National Road Safety Strategy that “no person should be killed or seriously injured on Australia’s roads”. it is assumed that to apply safe system principles to transform the road network will require improvements from the current accepted minimum standard to the safe system standard or quality. In reality, large parts of the aging road network do not yet meet the current minimum standards meaning the effort and investment to achieve safe system standard roads is likely to be a substantial underestimate. WALGA has recommended a review of the current standards, including the underlying principles, applied to road construction and maintenance.

Recommendations 4

Identify and quantify the differences and gaps in road standards to understand the extent of the task required to bring the network up to safe system standard.

Recommendation 5

Develop a program that supports innovation through funding of demonstration projects and encourages others by showcasing effective projects (e.g. national safe infrastructure awards).

Star ratings for local roads

Many jurisdictions set targets for zero deaths and serious injuries based on the safe system philosophy. Underlying that ambition is the assumption that transforming the road network is simply a matter of upgrading roads from the current minimum standard to safe system quality; however, the effort and investment required to achieve this is largely unknown.

An opportunity exists for the Australian Government to develop and fund a program to assess and apply a star rating to the local road network. This would identify the scale of the upgrade task and enable a systematic approach to prioritising and investing in safe system transformations. Further, this would allow a simple and transparent method of benchmarking and measuring progress, for example, against the Global Road Safety Performance Targets 3 and 46, which provides a framework for an investment program.

Recommendation 6

Develop and fund a program to assess and apply a star rating to the local road network.

Speed management

State Local Government Associations have rejected simplistic solutions like lowering speed limits on the local road network whilst prioritising investment (as specified in the National Road Safety Action Plan 2017-2019) for safe system infrastructure on the national, state and territory road networks as unacceptable.

ALGA supports WALGA in acknowledging that speed management is a crucial aspect in reducing death and serious injuries. However, this needs to be approached sensibly. WALGA's experience is that progressive targeted lowering of speed limits in areas of high-volume pedestrian or other vulnerable road users is more effective when planned in consultation with the relevant Local Government and community. Through collaboration with local governments, WALGA RoadWise advocates for speed limit reductions in selected areas.

Recommendation 7

Support and encourage targeted speed limit reductions planned in consultation with local governments and where possible involve community road safety partnerships.

Roads are self-explaining when they are consistent with the expectations of the road user, eliciting safe behaviour simply by design, which includes application and maintenance of lining and signing.

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.

Recommendation 8

Review current standards, including maintenance standards of road lining and signing, to ensure these methods adequately inform road users of appropriate behaviours and travel speed.

(e) Road trauma and incident data collection and coordination across Australia

Local councils would benefit significantly from access to detailed information on the level of fatalities and also serious crashes in their areas.

Data informing the implementation of road safety strategies

Opportunities exist for national leadership regarding road crash data. Implementing a safe system remains Australia's best chance to address the social and economic cost of road injury and death. However, the challenges and opportunities that exist in road safety mostly relate to our ability to implement and deliver effectively. Data collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting is an important activity supporting the implementation of road safety strategies.

Recommendation 9

Develop a means of monitoring the level and extent of implementation (process evaluation) to understand what effort achieves certain results and to identify the gaps in implementation.

Local Government access to road crash data

As stated previously, local governments own and manage a significant percentage of the road network in Australia. Local Governments are also responsible for the safety performance of their road network, which road trauma and crash incident data informs.

Recommendation 10

Provide Local Governments with access to consistent accurate and timely road trauma and crash incident data to guide decision-making.

Systems-based methodology to road crash investigations

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

Recommendation 11

Explore opportunities to develop and apply a systems-based methodology to road crash investigations, similar to aviation industry investigations.

Measure of “serious injury”

The National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 “is giving greater attention to the serious injury dimension of the road trauma problem.” The National Strategy states, “There is no reliable national collection of serious injury crash data, largely because of jurisdictional differences in injury definitions and reporting arrangements.”

The Strategy asks road transport agencies to work towards adopting nationally consistent road crash definitions essential for monitoring progress towards the serious injury target. However, the consistent measure of serious injury remains elusive in Australia.

Recommendation 12

With the States and Territories, the Commonwealth should develop a method of collating data so that “serious injury” information is reportable for Australia.

(f) Recommending strategies, performance measures and targets for the next National Road Safety Strategy

The President of ALGA is a member of the Transport and Infrastructure Council and the ALGA Secretariat participates in regular officials’ groups to develop such strategies and performance measures, as well as targets. ALGA will continue to place a priority on this work.

Safe system approach

Considered world’s best practice, the safe system approach models the strategies developed and applied by the best performing nations, such as Sweden’s Vision Zero and the Dutch Sustainable Safety. This approach, rather than relying on changing driver or road user behaviour, takes into account the fallibility of humans and recognizes that much of the road safety problem is the result of people making mistakes. ALGA supports the systems concept, and recommends the next National Road Safety Strategy adopt a more holistic approach to avoid silos of action resulting from compartmentalising the safe system approach into cornerstones/pillars.

National, State and Territory road networks are experiencing an increasing and complex mix of road users driving variety of vehicle configurations on roads of differing standards and surfaces e.g. tourist traffic or inexperienced road users mixing with heavy vehicles on regional and remote roads. This causes real risks to road-users. Road safety strategies must recognise and address.

Recommendation 13

Consider aligning the next National Road Safety Strategy with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to link with global objectives.

Recommendation 14

Consider a road safety framework allowing for the mix of personal, social, economic and environmental factors that contribute to road trauma.

Principle of shared responsibility

Shared responsibility is a principle universally adopted in the National and other safe system-based road safety strategies. This principle appears to have two key flaws - shared responsibility implies equal capacity; and sharing responsibility is likely to erode accountability. The National Road Safety Strategy should seek to better understand gaps in implementation and strengthen accountability.

Recommendation 15

Define/identify who can/should contribute to road safety then measure and monitor the capacity of the identified parties.

Recognition of Local Government's role in road safety

ALGA and WALGA acknowledge the Australian Government's commitment to and leadership in developing, coordinating and monitoring the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020 and the achievements reported in November 2017. Despite this, there remains a significant concern about the lack of similar safety gains for crashes involving:

- regional roads (e.g. run-off road crashes);
- head-on crashes;
- older drivers and motorcycle riders;
- motorcyclists; and
- pedestrians.

The National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 explicitly identifies Local Governments. However, the National Road Safety Action Plan 2015-2017 almost completely ignores this sphere of government, except in relation to reduced speed zones.

The goal of the National Road Safety Strategy was to reduce Australia's annual number of road deaths and serious injuries by at least 30 per cent by 2020. The importance of the local road network, where a high proportion of deaths and serious injuries occur is such that the strategy's goal cannot really be achieved without improvements on local roads.

Recommendation 16

Jurisdictions need to establish a formal structure, instrument and processes to enable regular and meaningful consultation and engagement with their local government sectors.

(g) Recommendations for the role of the newly established Office of Road Safety

There is a need to provide national leadership and a focus in the Commonwealth. This includes ensuring there is proper intra-governmental coordination at the Federal level. This also needs to ensure inter-governmental collaboration with state and territory, as well as local government bodies.

The newly established National Office of Road Safety (National Office) needs to assume the specific role to enhance national collaboration with state and territory road safety departments, local government and other key agencies and organisation that influence safety on Australia's roads.

Against this background, key functions of the National Office that should be provided include leadership on accountability, and working collaboratively with states, territories and local government to:

- Provide national accountability for the total road safety performance of the nation;
- Allocate, oversee and monitor the cost-effective allocation of National Road Safety Fund investments, and to establish a set of best practice guidelines to allocate funds cost-effectively. From a Local Government perspective, administering specific road safety programs such as the Black Spot Program and advocating for additional new programs relevant for local government need to be made available and actioned;
- Seek to support the identification and promulgation of best practice between local governments.
- There also needs to be a strong connection with BITRE on data collection and analysis;
- Establish, monitor and report against a set of key performance indicators that are measurable and reliable, and that truly reflect ultimate road safety performance in terms of reduced deaths and serious injuries on the road network;
- Conduct a gap analysis to identify areas of trauma that are appropriately defined and significant, and for which evidence-based countermeasures are available for effective application; and
- Support a national well-resourced strategic research program. This would also include major demonstration projects that would build on and complement Austroads and jurisdictional programs. It would include, for example reconciling the differing definitions to establish a national database of road fatalities and serious injuries, and to create a national data observatory.
- Also see recommendations 1, 6, 17 and 18 in this submission.

(h) Other measures to support the Australian Parliament's ongoing resolve to reduce incidents on our roads, with a focus on the recommendations from the Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020.

Evolution of the Australian Government Black Spot Program

ALGA supports WALGA in its call for continued safety-focused funding for the local road network. The Australian Government Black Spot Program is highly regarded by Local Governments. It remains the only national safety-focused source of funding for local roads and is greatly valued.

However, there are opportunities to develop the criteria and methodology in an evolutionary manner to better support not only reactive treatments, but also proactive mass action network-level treatments of locations/lengths informed by a greater emphasis on road safety audits, i.e. beyond Benefit Cost Ratios to Safe System Transformations

Future reviews of the Australian Government Black Spot Program should consider how diversifying the criteria and methodology (or even develop an alternate program) might better address the gap in safety performance on rural and remote roads. For example, funding for low cost treatments such as lines and signs (taken for granted in large urban centres) to help bring rural and remote roads closer to the current (minimum) standard.

Recommendation 17

Initiate research to identify and develop a more sophisticated safe-system aligned approach as an evolutionary step for the Australian Government Black Spot program.

Recommendation 18

Increase the percentage of funding allocated on the basis of road safety audits to proactively drive safe system transformation of the road network.

The National Road Safety Strategy Inquiry's key findings

Commit to a minimum \$3 billion a year road safety fund

Recent increases in deaths and serious injuries on Australia's roads demonstrate that the scale of resources currently allocated to reduce harm is far from adequate. The Federal Government should strongly link infrastructure funding to road safety outcomes to combat Australia's rising road toll. Investing in road safety focused infrastructure, safe systems and mobility partnerships with state, territory and local governments to accelerate the elimination of high-risk roads, particularly in regional and rural Australia.

The Inquiry into the National Roads Safety Strategy 2011-2020, released in September 2018, identified that considerable capacity and resource issues are hindering the ability of Local Governments to pursue the desired transformative approach to road safety.

ALGA also notes that one of the Inquiry report's key recommendations was to "Commit to a minimum \$3 billion annual road safety fund". A key aspect of this action was to "Empower the national road safety entity to disburse funds on federal, state and Local Government schemes that create stimulus and scale, follow agreed best practice guidelines ... and meet a demonstrated need or gap in action or scale".

To put matters into perspective, it's worth noting that "The fund would represent 10% of the \$30 billion plus annual cost of road trauma to the Australian community, and would support all of the recommendations from the inquiry", to be administered through the new national road safety entity.

Of the three levels of government, Local Government has the largest relative infrastructure task, in terms of asset management. Local roads account for around 75% of the total road length in Australia, or 662,000 kms. Yet Local Government has the smallest revenue base of all the tiers of government, raising only 3.4% of Australia's total taxation revenue. Unlike other levels of government, Local Government has no direct mechanism to raise funds for road construction and maintenance, such as road user charges, registration charges, or other road or transport-related fees or charges.

Specific targeted safe infrastructure program

As previously noted, the Australian Government's Black Spot program is highly regarded by Local Governments, but it remains the only national, safety-focused source of funding for local roads. There is an opportunity to initiate research, to identify and develop a complementary program which supports the implementation of proactive mass-action type treatments to improve road safety outcomes.

A safe infrastructure program that combines the targeted benefits of the Black Spot program (highly effective in addressing crash sites), as well as a new proactive mass-action program, will effectively scale up the delivery of safe system-aligned road infrastructure that will significantly and sustainably contribute to the prevention and reduction of road deaths and serious injuries.

Appointing a Cabinet Minister for Road Safety

ALGA strongly supports the appointment of a Federal Cabinet minister with multi-agency authority for managing all road safety. This would provide a national focal point and accountability for delivery of federal programs and the National Road Safety Strategy and formalise non-partisan support for road safety action building on the existing Parliamentary Friends for Road Safety.

The appointing of a Federal Cabinet minister for road safety would prioritise the issue, and ensure it is addressed by government. The minister would be responsible for establishing and monitoring road safety performance indicators tied to all federal road infrastructure, and vehicle related research and development projects, federal road funding (for all jurisdictions, including local government) and all associated federal transport related contracts.

This position would be responsible for developing thorough cooperative processes at the scale needed for state and local government projects to ensure SAFE is a priority.

Building road safety considerations into all government arrangements that intersect with road transport would also be a key responsibility for the minister. Furthermore, the minister should oversee development of an interdepartmental and external taskforce—and strong strategic alliances with states, territories and local government — to ensure that national actions complement each other and optimise harm reduction on Australia's road network. Driving accountabilities among peers is a powerful way to achieve successful measures while seeking alternative approaches where the trauma picture is static or deteriorating.

The Minister for Road Safety could also be required to report progressive results of trauma outcomes and KPIs to the Federal Parliament twice a year. Tabling the results would confirm the Australian Government's priority to eliminate serious road trauma on Australia's roads. Elevating road safety in Parliament also helps drive home accountability for delivering on commitments, and implementing new interventions where targets are not being met.

Given the above circumstances, at the national level it is appropriate that a Federal Cabinet minister with sole responsibility for road safety should be appointed to oversight and lead this important and ongoing endeavour.

Implementation priorities/Action Plan issues relevant to Local Government (including network analysis)

The Transport and Infrastructure Ministerial Council (Council) agreed that officials report to Council regularly on progress on an implementation plan which includes measures to:

- Develop a national approach to road network risk assessment for councils to consider; and
- Ensure that infrastructure funding across each level of government is safety focused and accelerates the elimination of high-risk roads.

It will be a major challenge to see how network risk assessment can be managed for Local Government in the absence of substantial additional resources. There are currently few examples of this analysis being undertaken because of the lack of service resources and capacity in councils. One example is in Queensland where there has been funding to undertake an AusRAP Safety project which has involved safety assessment of Queensland's sealed local government Local Roads of Regional Significance network over a three-year period which has just ended and the data has yet to be fully assessed.

It is worth noting that the funding for the project was provided by the Queensland State Government, matched by participating Regional Roads and Transport Groups. There do not appear to be any other examples of network wide analysis of local government roads.

There is a skill deficit in councils regarding engineers, and our research suggest the need for engineers becomes greater into the future and in regional areas. A national report on the Local Government Workforce and Future skills needs was produced for ALGA in September 2018. The report revealed that around 70% of councils had skill shortages, and the top skills shortage occupation across the country for Rural and Remote councils, Metropolitan councils and Regional city councils, was engineers.

This raises the question of whether there is there a model to improve access to road safety engineering expertise for regional councils through cooperation between state local government associations and state main roads departments? There may be examples in Queensland or South Australia that could be replicated in other states?

Star ratings for local roads

Many jurisdictions are setting targets for zero deaths and serious injuries, based on the safe system philosophy. Underlying that ambition is the assumption that the transformation of the road network is simply a matter of upgrading roads from the currently accepted minimum standard, to safe system quality.

In reality large parts of the aging road network do not meet the current minimum standards. The effort and investment requirement to address this gap is largely unknown.

The opportunity exists for the Commonwealth and the Jurisdictions to develop and fund a program to assess and apply a star rating to the local road networks.

This program would identify the scale of that task and enable a systematic approach to prioritising and investing in safe system transformations. Progress has been made through work with Austroads on developing an approach to network analysis, and ALGA would strongly support an injection of funding from the Australian Government to allow councils to undertake the analysis approach developed by Austroads.

Summary and Conclusion

ALGA welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety in response to the Committee's Inquiry Terms of Reference. ALGA looks forward to an on-going dialogue and consultation with the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety and the Committee Secretariat, as required.

In summary, we need to address local government's lack of capacity and resources. Funding is important as part of this, as is a recognition that we need to deal with skills shortages in the transport area, especially engineers going forward.

Greater support for local government by state governments is important, and the communique of the last meeting of the Transport and Infrastructure Council in November 2019 highlights this.

We seek recognition of Local Government's role and a commitment to developing an inclusive partnership to progress the national safe system approach towards a future of zero harm from road crashes. The development of authentic partnership arrangements must be built upon a common vision and goals, with resources (knowledge, funding, skills, data etc) shared in a manner that enables Local Governments to participate fully and effectively.

We acknowledge that, at the council level, councils need to make road safety one of their central objectives – adopting the safe systems approach.

Councils also need to play a greater role in leading the community including by bringing together community leaders.