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INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC WORKS
ENGINEERING AUSTRALASIA

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Better maintenance and lighting will help get road safety back on track: IPWEA

Australasia's peak body for public works engineering has responded to a damning report on Australia's road safety with a call for greater investment in road maintenance and technology.

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) applauded the release of the Australian Government-initiated inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy, which found that Australia's road safety performance had stalled and a 'dramatic' change was needed.

IPWEA CEO Robert Fuller said the human and economic cost of inaction outlined in the report – 12,000 people killed and 360,000 injured at a cost of \$300 billion by 2030 – was too great for governments of all levels to ignore the safety benefits of better road maintenance and road lighting.

"The Australian Local Government Association's *National State of the Assets 2015* report found \$8.2 billion or 10% of Australia's roads are in poor to very poor condition," Mr Fuller said.

"While we know that road safety is a complex problem that requires an appropriately complex response, we also know that poorly maintained roads – particularly outside metropolitan areas – are contributing to the loss of life and injuries sustained in road incidents.

"Road maintenance is a key element to road safety – we need to shift the political focus from building new roads to maintaining the roads that we already have and investing in world best practice maintenance and road surface technology.

"This is not just an issue for the Commonwealth Government, but must be tackled by all three levels of government, starting with local government identifying community safety issues and developing strategies to deliver outcomes to local communities.

"State and federal governments must assist with funding and other tools to reduce the current unacceptable performance in this area."

The IPWEA NSW Roads and Transport Directorate's [2017 Road Management Report](#) found the state's local councils will face greater risk exposure in the future if funding and management practices aren't improved.

Mr Fuller also pointed to better street lighting as an underutilised road safety tool. LEDs produce a clear, white light that has been shown to dramatically improve visibility, yet only about 15% of Australia's streetlights have been changed over to LEDs.

"In fact, experts suggest road lighting is the most cost effective road safety measure available," Mr Fuller said, referring to research published in IPWEA's [Street Lighting and Smart Controls Programme Roadmap](#).

"Australia also has some of the lowest lighting levels on residential streets in the developed world – raising these levels would have a positive impact on road safety," Mr Fuller said.

"There are also numerous other technologies that have been embraced by various road authorities and warrant greater investment; flexible wire rope safety barriers, for example, have been shown to significantly reduce the risk of death and serious injury in crashes, particularly head-on and loss-of-control crashes."

The report's 12 recommendations included: *"Invest in road safety focused infrastructure, safe system and mobility partnerships with state, territory and local governments that accelerate the elimination of high-risk roads,"* and *"Make road safety a genuine part of business as usual within Commonwealth, state, territory and local government."*

For interviews

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About IPWEA

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia is the peak not-for-profit association for public works and engineering professionals across Australia and New Zealand. It provides training, publications and advocacy to support its 4,000-plus members and 20,000-plus community of engineering professionals who provide essential community infrastructure. Visit www.ipwea.org.