



# Reducing trauma on Australian roads

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Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety

August 2021



**IPWEA**

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC WORKS  
ENGINEERING AUSTRALASIA



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## About Us

The Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA) is the peak association for the professionals who deliver public works and engineering services to communities in Australia and New Zealand. IPWEA provides services to its members and advocacy on their behalf.

Underpinned by our vision *to enhance the quality of life of our communities through public works and services*, IPWEA deems safety as a major priority.

Representing more than 4,750 members and an online subscriber community in excess of 30,000, IPWEA is an industry leader in infrastructure planning, delivery and operation and therefore has a keen interest in ensuring that our members and the communities that they support, have a safe and reliable road network.

To help practitioners maintain the high level of competency the community demands, IPWEA provides regular continuing professional development, conferences, technical publications, and the chance to be involved in committees addressing technical issues.

Experience has shown that with the right legislative framework, supportive guidance and relevant skills, significant improvement in the performance and safety of road infrastructure is possible and that additional investment may not necessarily be required in all instances.

IPWEA's Federated model provides access to professionals working across Australia in most of the 537 Councils. This national reach combined with our technical expertise, education and training tools, are available to assist with the recommendations outlined in this submission and IPWEA welcomes the opportunity to work with the Commonwealth Government and its agencies to deliver unprecedented road safety improvements to achieve Vision Zero by 2050.

## Recommendations

1. Support the national dissemination of existing road safety training programs developed by IPWEA and its Divisions to upskill public works professionals working in Local Government
2. Address the shortfall of investment in targeted infrastructure countermeasures on local roads.
3. Investment in building safer road infrastructure underpin the new national road safety strategy for the life of the strategy.
4. Assign dedicated resources within the Federal Office of Road Safety to develop programs and services specifically to address the needs of Local Government.
5. Facilitate the uptake of higher standards of safety equipped vehicles for Local Governments in their fleets.
6. Facilitate the uptake of technology to reduce and ultimately eliminate risk to roadworkers.
7. Work with gig economy to ensure that minimum safety standards are established
8. Support IPWEA to expand the successful fleet management program to include a new credential on the Future of Fleet including making safe fleet purchasing decisions and raising awareness of how to transition to safer, cleaner and fit for purpose fleets.



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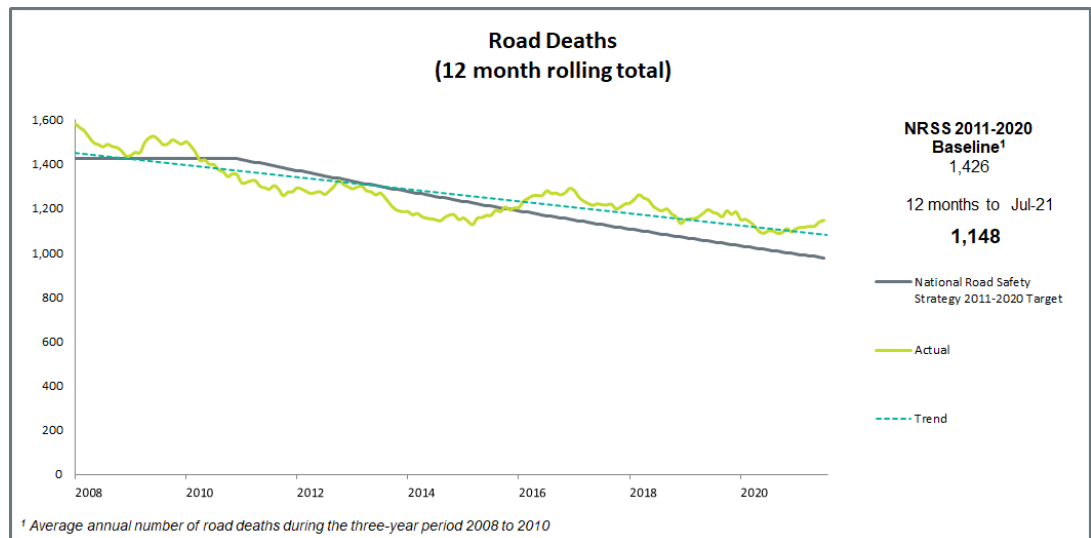
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## Response to the Enquiries Terms of Reference

Measures to support the Australian Parliament's ongoing resolve to eliminate road crash fatal and serious injuries with a focus on ways to achieving Vision Zero by 2050.

IPWEA supports the Australian Parliament's resolve to eliminate fatal and serious injuries and achieving Vision Zero by 2050.

The graph below, taken from the National Road Safety Strategy Website, demonstrates that there is still much to be done to meet this objective.



NRSS Website accessed August 2021

It is well understood that multiple factors contribute to the outcomes of crashes. Exposure is a factor, but not the only one, as the road safety performance during COVID 19 has illustrated, that despite reductions in traffic volumes during lockdowns in 2020, the death toll did not reduce commensurately<sup>1</sup>.

IPWEA supports a systems approach to road safety, which includes investment in safer roads, safer vehicles and safer people. While the Safe System philosophy has been in Australia since the late 1990's there is still limited understanding in how to change practices to ensure that we eliminate fatal and serious injuries from our road networks.

<sup>1</sup> <https://trid.trb.org/view/1756436>

***We recommend that building on our track record of delivering world best practice in training for Local Government and Public Works professionals, a targeted training for public works professionals working in and for Local Government be implemented.***

This would include not only engineers, but transport and urban planners and social services, offered by Local Governments across Australia.

The IPWEA national structure, through our Divisions can be utilised as the vehicle to support the widespread dissemination of road safety and safe systems framework training for Local Government across Australia.

IPWEA Divisions already deliver extensive road safety training programs across Australia, however the barrier to accessing these courses can be significantly reduced through Federal funding subsidising attendance at these courses in person and online.

## The effectiveness of existing road safety programs across Australia; opportunities to improve them and encourage broader take-up of effective approaches

IPWEA acknowledges that there has been unprecedented investment in road safety infrastructure spending undertaken, in response to various COVID19 stimulus programs.<sup>2</sup>

Australian communities will be beneficiaries from improved infrastructure for generations to come. However, whilst this significant investment targeted primarily state and national roads, there is still a big task to upgrade the regional local road network to the 3 Star or better standard that underpins this road safety program.

We have seen extensive works on regional state and national highways, from the Road Safety Program on treatments such as road widening, shoulder sealing, linemarking and roadside protection, and it is important that we provide the same treatments across vast network of local roads in regional areas through an ongoing investment program.

***IPWEA recommends that investment in building safer road infrastructure underpin the new national road safety strategy for the life of the strategy.***

This funding should include a systems approach which provides for not only road infrastructure improvements, but the development and dissemination of programs of engagement with communities to build greater understanding and awareness of the road safety benefits of these treatments through our forums and technical committees.

We acknowledge that there are over 500 Councils in Australia, compared with the 8 State and Territory agencies and this makes it difficult to involve all Councils in consultation and decision making. Through the IPWEA network we are confident that we can work with the Office of Road Safety to access relevant individuals/committees within our membership that can better inform the development of programs and tools for Local Government.

***IPWEA recommends that the new Office of Road Safety allocate a dedicated resource/resources to work with Local Government across Australia, through IPWEA and other entities to better align***

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Government Road Safety Program  
<https://www.officeofroadsafety.gov.au/programs/infrastructure-programs>

*investment and programs to meet the needs of local communities and practitioners working in and for local government.*

Opportunities for government policy in health, education, industry, transport and other areas to contribute to road trauma elimination, integrating Safe System principles.

IPWEA members and their organisations have been rapidly investing in 5 star fleets, assisting to drive improved vehicles entering the Australian market.

There still remains a shortfall in the safety standards of vehicles used in commercial and industrial applications and this is an area that fleet purchasers cannot influence on their own.

Through Australian design rules, emission standards and safety and environmental policies, the Australian government can deliver not only, safer vehicles for the commercial and domestic fleet, but also environmental benefits from reductions in transport generated emissions.

Understanding the benefits from safer and cleaner fleets is integral however being able to access and afford the transition in a realistic timeframe is a barrier for all fleet operators including Local Government.

IPWEA has a well established Fleet Management<sup>3</sup> program, that works closely with industry and members to support them to maintain a sustainable investment in their fleets.

*We recommend that this program be expanded to support a new credential on the Future of Fleet including making safe fleet purchasing decisions and raising awareness of how to transition to safer, cleaner and fit for purpose fleets.*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ipwea.org/communities/fleetplantmanagement>



Opportunities to reduce road trauma in the workplace, working with Work Health and Safety agencies and employers across Australia; including a focus on heavy vehicles and the gig economy

According to the ABS<sup>4</sup> the Local Government sector employs 186000 people (2020) across Australia, this is a significant workforce covering white and blue collar workers.

Strict work health and safety policies support these employees, however road trauma in the workplace is not eliminated from this sector.

All good safety practice starts with elimination and mitigation of risk. We can eliminate risks from workplace road trauma, by minimising exposure to the risk. This can be achieved by offering workers alternatives to driving to work, or driving for work.

Incentivised use of public transport and increased options to work from home are existing mechanisms to eliminate exposure to the risks of road trauma in the workplace.

### **Roadworker Safety**

The most at risk workers in the road sector are those that work on the roads. In Local Government, this workforce makes up the vast majority of employees and contractors, who undertake, repairs, maintenance and construction activities to keep our communities safe and connected.

This risk to road workers has been recognised by the industry and IPWEA is proud to be a member of the Altus Road Worker Safety Working Group<sup>5</sup>.

Investment in technology that replaces those roles, that put people at increased risks in the workplace, must be prioritised.

Such technologies include traffic signals instead of people as stop-go controllers, remote operation of heavy machinery, and warning to workers if they step into or out of designated safe working areas.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/employment-and-earnings-public-sector-australia/latest-release>

<sup>5</sup> <https://altustraffics.com.au/road-worker-safety-working-group>

Local Australian companies such as Slasherteck<sup>6</sup>, Boral<sup>7</sup> and Transurban<sup>8</sup> are investing in these technologies to keep their workers safe.

Increased costs of moving to safer but more expensive solutions, may be a barrier to adoption and as such there may need to be laws introduced to see a faster adoption of these technologies that mitigate the risks to workers.

***IPWEA recommends that the Australian Government consider how they can facilitate the uptake of technology to reduce and ultimately eliminate risk to roadworkers.***

### Gig Economy

As we move to promote more active travel choices and the gig economy sees the rise of different types of vehicles, sharing the road and footpaths with workers and the public, we need to be able to understand the infrastructure needs to support these interactions.

The escalation of the gig economy this decade has seen an increase in delivery vehicles using the road and road related network. The nature of the employment of workers in the gig economy, means that as self-employed owner operator businesses, it is difficult to regulate the industry

Government has regulatory opportunities to mitigate the growing risk from gig economy workers. The chain of responsibility legislation in place for freight forwarders, could be considered as a model for targeting those that employ subcontractors in the gig economy to drive increased safety standards for this group of road users.

Minimum levels of vehicle safety should be developed that include a requirement for clothing to be worn so as to be visible at night, the minimum age and condition of the vehicle used for delivery and maximum work hours.

***IPWEA recommends that the Australian Government work with the gig economy industries to ensure that minimum safety standards are established.***

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.slasherteck.com.au/products/traffic-and-security-management/technology>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.boral.com.au/projects/boral-fmas>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulVaTob2\\_SA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulVaTob2_SA)



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## **Conclusion**

IPWEA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Governments vision to achieve Vision Zero by 2050.

There is still much work to do to ensure that there is a clear understanding of how to get to this goal and IPWEA is pleased to share the insights that we have gained from our community of over 30 000 subscribers.

The recommendations in this paper are aimed at leveraging the expertise of IPWEA and our Divisions to support the development of skills and expertise within Local Government.

IPWEA welcomes the opportunity to expand on this paper and the recommendations upon request.