

Inquiry into progress under the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020

To:

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Injury Matters

Injury Matters leads the way in preventing injury and supporting recovery by providing programs and services that enable Western Australians to live long and healthy lives. Priority injuries both unintentional and intentional in Western Australia (WA) include falls, road trauma, suicide and self-harm, poisoning, violence, drowning, and burns.

Injury Matters is a not-for-profit organisation that empowers people, communities, professionals and agencies to modify factors to prevent injury and support recovery. Injury Matters achieves this through three flagship programs: Stay On Your Feet[®], Know Injury, and Road Trauma Support WA.

- The **Stay On Your Feet[®]** program, funded by the WA Department of Health, provides information, education, and support to community members and health professionals to reduce falls and fall-related injuries among older adults living in the community.
- The **Know Injury** program, funded by the WA Department of Health, enhances the capacity of practitioners and organisations to deliver evidence-informed injury prevention activities by providing knowledge, training, resources, and networking opportunities.
- **Road Trauma Support WA**, funded via the WA Road Safety Commission from the Road Trauma Trust Account, provides free information, support and counselling to reduce psychological and social distress for anyone affected by road trauma in Western Australia.

Injury Matters supports the “Inquiry into progress under the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020” and the move to a safe road transport system which minimises harm to all users and the provision of support for those that have been affected by road trauma. A key strength of the current strategy has been the detailed implementation plan, timeline and evaluation. Injury Matters encourages continued emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of the National Road Safety Strategy and future directions of the outcome of the inquiry.

Key factors involved in the road crash death and serious injury trends

Despite efforts to improve road safety and driver behaviour, road fatalities and critical injuries remain a serious problem in Western Australia. In 2016 there were 196 fatalities in reported road crashes in Western Australia; 23 more than the preceding five year (2011-2015) average of 173.¹ 121 (or 62%) of fatalities were as a result of crashes which involved at least one behavioural factor, including speed (65), alcohol (62), inattention (28) and fatigue (27).¹

Further, there were 235 critical injuries reported in road crashes in Western Australia; 24 more than the preceding five year (2011-2015) average of 211.¹ 183 (or 78%) of critical injuries were a result of at least one behavioural factor, including alcohol (76), speed (50), inattention (32) and fatigue (25).¹



Issues and priorities for consideration in development of a post-2020 national road safety strategy and 2018-20 action plan

A systems approach such as Safe Systems, to road safety that will offer maximum impact in ensuring a safer road environment in Australia.

While investment in road infrastructure and safer vehicles that better protects road users when they do make a mistake is important, it's equally important to invest in programs which have a behavioural focus to further educate and inform the public on road safety. This is particularly important for high risk population groups (i.e. older adults, rural and remote and inexperienced drivers).

It is important to acknowledge the long-term affect a road crash may have on individuals and communities involved such as witnesses, first responders and family members. Despite mental health consequences of a road traffic crash having the potential to be long-term, they are often overlooked in comparison to physical health outcomes.² The World Health Organisation describes mental health care as a key component of the post-crash response.³

Road crashes are associated with significant psychological distress.⁴ Research studies in Australia indicate that 8 - 29% of road traffic crash survivors develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).² PTSD is one of the most common psychological consequences for adult road traffic crash survivors and can have serious and long-lasting consequences for recovery if left untreated.²

Continued investment in post-crash care, particularly mental health support services, is a priority issue that requires further consideration nationally. The provision of high quality, accessible post-crash services for those affected by road trauma, will assist in reducing the number of hospital admissions/re-admissions and use of other health services, as well as enhance the quality and life of those affected.

Other areas for consideration include:

- apply evidence-based research that considers the unique road environments in each state and territory;
- centralised national data base with access to evidence informed interventions e.g. <http://knowinjury.org.au/evidence-bank/>
- fund organisations to undertake research where there is limited evidence and implement evidence based programs that support road safety initiatives, in particular with at risk populations (i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities);
- further investment in driver education and training programs along with additional requirements, restrictions or strategies for new, novice and older drivers;
- continued investment in behaviour change programs to address common behavioural factors associated with crashes such as speed, fatigue, inattention and alcohol;
- greater national investment and improved policy for a safe road transport system, including minimum standards for design and construction;
- more rigorous legislation for vehicle safety ratings and world best practice safety technology;
- progression of a mandatory national road crash data collection system to be implemented with minimum reporting requirements and timeframes for reporting. As per the 2015-17 Action Plan, this should include the matched crash and hospital database systems. This would provide more holistic data from a national perspective and enable the identification of emerging issues, trends and key factors in road crashes. Access to the system/database should be made available to relevant stakeholders.

Arrangements for the management of road safety and the NRSS

An opportunity now presents for relevant federal, state and local government departments along with industry, non-government organisations and the community to take action and commit to achieving reductions in death and serious injuries on our roads.

The National Road Safety Strategy 2011-20 and the National Road Safety Action Plan 2018-20 should continue to be overseen and driven by the Transport and Infrastructure Council. The Council should continue to be advised and assisted by the Transport and Infrastructure Senior Officials' Committee (TISOC) and the Infrastructure Working Group (IWG) to provide advice and guidance on the coordination of infrastructure planning and investment, across governments and the private sector.

TISOC, the IWG and State and Territory Governments must engage with and seek advice, input and recommendations from relevant transport organisations, industry bodies, researchers, not-for-profit organisations and the community with regard to the development of prevention (environment and infrastructure) and behavioral strategies. The strategies and programs must be evidence informed and driven at the local level.

Injury Matters is supportive of the Inquiry into the progress of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 and the development of a National Road Safety Action Plan 2018-20 and would welcome the opportunity to discuss further any of the issues or priorities included in this submission.

Should you have any queries relating to this submission please contact Ryan Fernie, Trauma Support Manager via email at rfern@injurymatters.org.au or by telephone on 08 9420 7212.

Yours sincerely



Sandy Lukjanowski
Chief Executive

2 March 2018

References

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3. Post-crash response: Supporting those affected by road traffic crashes. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2016
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