



From: roadsafetystrategy@infrastructure.gov.au on behalf of Office of Road Safety <roadsafetystrategy@infrastructure.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 22 March 2021 5:09 PM
To: RoadSafetyStrategy
Subject: National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30 - have your say submission - Brian Fildes [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: comments-for-the-draft-nrss.pdf

Submitted on Mon, 2021-03-22 16:52

Submitted values are:

Name

Brian Fildes

Organisation

Monash University

Email



State

Vic

Which area/s of the draft Strategy are you commenting on (select all that apply):

The themes – safe roads, safe road use, safe vehicles and speed management , Data and performance management, Governance, Infrastructure planning and investment , Regional roads , Remote areas, Vehicle safety , Vulnerable road users , Risky road use

What is your primary area of interest in road safety?

Road Safety research

What road safety issues are the most important to address?

Speeding and several others

What do you believe are the strengths of this draft Strategy?

Focus on 50km/h reduction in fatalities by 2030 and some consistency with other strategies

Is there anything important that you think is missing from this draft Strategy?

Several - see the attached document

Do you give permission for your submission to be published on this website following the end of the consultation period?

Yes

Comments on the Draft National Road Safety Strategy – 2021 to 2030.

With the recent release of the UN General Assembly resolution A/74/L, 86, proclaiming the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, it is reassuring that the draft National Road Safety Strategy is committed to the goal of a 50% reduction in fatalities and a 30% reduction in severe injuries by 2030. While the strategy calls for the adoption of a Safe Systems approach to research these goals, the nine priorities listed are arguably unlikely to achieve these admirable these goals alone without an appropriate Action Plan that fully embraces the Safe System.

The Safe System Assessment Framework, outlined in Austroads AR50916, published in February 2016, clearly identified 4-major principles of a safe system namely Safe Roads, Safe Vehicles, Safe People and Safe Speeds. Interestingly, the draft National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) seems to have downgraded the role of Safe Speeds in both the Themes and Priorities on page 2 and beyond in this document. The only mention of speed management is a section on page 14 that clearly shows the relationship between high probability of a fatal (and severe) injury with collision speeds above 30km/h.

Speed as a Causal Factor

The World Health Organisation estimated that in High-Income Countries, speeding is involved in at least 30% of fatalities each year with an associated higher involvement in survivable severe injuries due to impact force severity (WHO, 2004). Further, they argued that reducing speed will also lead to fewer crashes as well from reduced stopping distance. Surely, this should be a major focus of the NRSS to help achieve the targets proposed.

The WHO (2018) recently proposed that a 50km/h speed limit should be standard in most urban and suburban areas. Indeed, this was further supported by findings from the 3rd Ministerial Congress in Sweden in 2020 and in a number of recent research projects in Australia. In addition, it has been shown that reducing the speed limit in local streets to 30km/h has a significant safety benefit also from high speeders in these residential areas (Lawrence et al 2020). Interestingly, many European countries adopted 30km/h for local residential streets many years ago with significant community safety benefits.

Vehicles and Infrastructure

Active vehicle safety technology has advanced substantially in recent times as noted on page 16, yet many of these technologies suffer from slow take-up rates. Moreover, the push for autonomous vehicles is rapidly growing, predominantly driven by industry. There is clearly an urgent need for National Governments to show leadership in this area to ensure maximum safety benefits are obtained from these potential technical advancements.

An associated issue is the state of current roads and IT systems to support many of these new safety technologies. A paper from Monash University (Peiris, et al, 2020) outlined the poor state of roads in urban, rural, and remote areas in Australia, many that don't have the capability or equipment required to support active safety technologies. In addition, not all regions across Australia have the necessary IT support either as an alternative to relying on the road surface.

While State Governments are currently responsible for the majority of their roads, there is a need for greater national involvement to ensure consistency across the country and with sufficient funding to bring many of these roads up to a sufficient quality to support these technical improvements.

Other Issues

The 9-priorities listed on pages 15-18 address a number of important priorities to reduce harm that embrace a number of important Safe System Principles. However, they do not adequately cover many important known current crash factors such as speeding, drink-driving, driver-distraction, child-protection, cycling, and pedestrian, to mention a few. There are known to be major safety road user problems still on the road. There have been some substantial safety improvements to date, but clearly more is still required to achieve a 50% reduction by 2030.

One issue the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety highlighted was a call for an increased focus on modal choice with multiple transportation usage. This is a promising area for the future where forms of traffic (including first and last journeys) might be selected based on safety as well as other selection criteria. The benefits of this approach still need further research.

As noted above, it's my opinion, the draft strategy in its current form is unlikely to achieve the ten-year targets outlined in the strategy without a broader focus on current best practice evidence and a more comprehensive view of the long-term future of transportation.

Brian Fildes, PhD, Emeritus Professor

Mobile: [REDACTED]

22nd March 2020

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