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House of Representatives Joint Select Committee on Road Safety

“Inquiry on steps that can be taken to reduce Australia’s road accident rates, trauma and deaths on our roads.”

Submission By: Safer Australian Roads And Highways (SARAH) Inc

Purpose of the Inquiry

The Joint Select Committee on Road Safety has been established to inquire into and report on:

- i the effectiveness of existing road safety support services and programs, including opportunities to integrate Safe System principles into health, education, industry and transport policy;*
- ii the impact of road trauma on the nation, including the importance of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries in remote and regional areas;*
- iii the possible establishment of a future parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Safety and its functions;*
- iv measures to ensure state, territory and local government road infrastructure investment incorporates the Safe System principles;*
- v road trauma and incident data collection and coordination across Australia;*
- vi recommending strategies, performance measures and targets for the next National Road Safety Strategy;*
- vii recommendations for the role of the newly established Office of Road Safety; and*
- viii 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.*



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Who is SARAH?

Safer Australian Roads and Highways (SARAH) Inc, also known by its website handle as SarahGroup, was established by the Frazer family after their 23-year-old daughter Sarah was killed in a completely avoidable road crash on the Hume Highway on 15 February 2012. As a consequence of this tragedy, the family decided that they would contribute to improving road safety outcomes through their policy development, victim support, community education as well as advocacy work.

By March 2012, the name Safer Australian Roads and Highways (SARAH), as well as the website SarahGroup.Org was established. By May 2012, they had also established: i) The Yellow Ribbon as a Road Safety symbol and: ii) “Drive So Others Survive!” (#DriveSOS) as their primary motto.

<https://www.sarahgroup.org/>

On 15 May 2012 the family provided a 23,000 signature Road Safety Petition to the NSW Premier and at the same time they established, Yellow Ribbon Road Safety Week to bring focus to the human tragedy of vehicle crashes. Later that same year SARAH, would become a Not-For-Profit NGO.

In May 2013, their second road safety event would cross from New South Wales to include Queensland, and in doing so, their road safety initiative would become Yellow Ribbon *National* Road Safety Week. (Since 2013 it has been an event of the biennial United Nations Global Road Safety Week. Also that year, SARAH became a member of the Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety and in 2015, a global partner of the “Maio Amarelo” or Yellow Ribbon May).

By 2014 the Week was being celebrated across Australia as Yellow Ribbon National Road Safety Week, and in that year, SARAH was recognised as a finalist in the 3M ACRS -Diamond Road Safety Awards - Australasian College of Road Safety for establishing the national week.

In 2015 SARAH received a highly commended award at the 3M ACRS -Diamond Road Safety Awards for establishing yellow ribbon as the accepted national road safety symbol.

Now in its eight year, SARAH’s annual initiative is a major and indeed leading road safety event that brings focus not only to the consequences of road crashes and trauma, but what we can do as a nation to change how we build and maintain our roads, and how as drivers and riders, we must change aberrant behaviour.



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SARAH is Committed to Drive Change

SARAH's founding philosophy is "Vision Zero" and our concept is simple:

As everyone has a right to get home safe to their loved ones... every day... no exceptions, we must:

- i. ensure our infrastructure is designed, built and maintained to **both passively and actively**, protect those who are vulnerable – in other words, ensure no one is left in harm's way;*
- ii. when driving or riding, we must each commit to **actively** look after those on the road ahead and choose to "Drive So Others Survive!"*

SARAH's Recommendations to the Inquiry

With the Inquiry Terms of Reference in mind, SARAH makes the following observations and subsequent recommendations.

Terms of Reference Point 1.

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

On 8 September 2017, the then Commonwealth Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Hon Darren Chester MP announced the commencement of an independent Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020 (NRSS).

<https://www.roadsafety.gov.au/nrss/inquiry>

The NRSS Inquiry was chaired by two independent experts: Associate Professor Jeremy Woolley, Director of the Centre for Automotive Safety Research at the University of Adelaide, and Dr John Crozier, Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons' Trauma Committee. They were assisted



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by two Principal Advisers: Mr Lauchlan McIntosh AM, the then President of the Australasian College of Road Safety, and Mr Rob McInerney, Chief Executive of the International Road Assessment Program.

The Terms of Reference were:

- i* Identify the key factors involved in the road crash death and serious injury trends including recent increases in 2015 and 2016.
- ii* Review the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 and supporting 2015-17 Action Plan, with particular reference to the increase in deaths and serious injuries from road crashes over the last two years.
- iii* Identify issues and priorities for consideration in development of a post-2020 national road safety strategy and 2018-2020 action plan, focusing on how Australia can recognise and move towards a safe road transport system which minimises harm to all users.
- iv* Advise on arrangements for the management of road safety and the NRSS, looking at best coordination and use of the capacity and contributions of all partners.

The Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, published in September 2018 and indeed Peter Frazer, SARAH's President, spoke at the release of the Report in the Senate Hearing Rooms at Commonwealth Parliament.

SARAH is concerned that the Inquiry Recommendations of Associate Professor Woolley, and Dr Crozier have not been fully adopted, and as such, the required step change has not occurred. For instance, Recommendation 1, notes:

“Create strong national leadership by appointing a Cabinet minister with specific multi-agency responsibility to address the hidden epidemic of road trauma including its impact on the health system”

SARAH is very pleased that the Assistant Minister for Road Safety and Freight Transport, Hon Scott Buchholz MP, has been appointed, and we note the important commitment that the Deputy Prime Minister Hon Michael McCormack MP has to this issue however given the incredible responsibilities of the Deputy Prime Minister, a Cabinet level position is needed to assist and reinforce the importance of road safety.



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Indeed for the position to have the influence it needs so ensure that ***“opportunities to integrate Safe System principles into health, education, industry and transport policy”***, the position should be that of a Cabinet Minister. Otherwise and despite the best intentions of both the Deputy Prime Minister and Assistant Minister, lack of substantive road safety improvements/outcomes, means the resultant death of 1200 people and serious injuries to more than 36,000 individuals, and at a cost of 30 billion dollars to the economy annually, road safety will continue to be seen as a peripheral issue. The commitment must be to make this a primary national issue for the nation.

Terms of Reference Point 2.

“The impact of road trauma on the nation, including the importance of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries in remote and regional areas”;

“Road safety advocacy is about garnering change within our communities. It is challenging because people do not want to talk about the consequences of road crashes nor how we must change our aberrant behaviours or provide the necessary resources to achieve Vision Zero. This means that NGOs and road safety advocates are constantly fighting an uphill battle for ‘hearts and minds’...”

Peter Frazer, President of Safer Australian Roads and Highways (SARAH).

http://roadsafetyngos.org/sh_events/ministerial-conference-sparks-hope-future/

As an organisation SARAH was born out of the very tragedy that is a road crash... It is personal and life changing and anyone who has firsthand experience of the pain and suffering of losing a loved one, is always committed to saving the community from their experience.

As an important aside, this inquiry is entitled “Inquiry on steps that can be taken to reduce Australia’s road **accident** rates, trauma and deaths on our roads.” We implore the Committee to NOT use the word ‘**accident**’... road deaths and serious injuries are not Acts of God... death and serious injury is caused by crashes . And importantly, because crashes have causes, as a community we already have best practice/good practice evidence-based solutions to drastically reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries that occur in Australia on our roads.



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What we are missing is the **‘will’** to lead change!

While the comments below emphasise technology, we note that this is not a panacea. SARAH recognises that the implementation of technological solutions needs community acceptance and as such, they must go hand-in-hand with campaigns that create road safety leaders and advocates, campaign such as National Road Safety Week.

<https://www.sarahgroup.org/nrsw-2019-report>

Below is a summary of some practical evidence-based technical enforcement solutions that should be widely implemented in urban as well as rural and remote communities. There is also a comment on consideration to change criminal code titles to re-emphasise the seriousness of a vulnerable individual being killed by a driver/rider undertaking an aberrant act of choice.

Problem: Speeding

Practical Solution: Camera Enforcement - Point to Point (P2P - Average Speed)

Research is unequivocal regarding the success of P2P cameras however there is reluctance to utilise the technology more widely due to perceived community backlash. Having said that, P2P cameras do eliminate the benefit of speeding because they measure the average kilometres per hour over longer distances. The technology is mature and indeed multiple gantries at 10 or 20 kilometres distances would be particularly effective in rural and remote locations.

“The standout result from the analysis shows, after accounting for SSPs and trend, a 36.4% (95% confidence interval: 25-46%) reduction in the mean rate of fatal and serious collisions in the post-installation period. The change in personal injury collisions of all severities was less pronounced, with a 16% (95% confidence interval: 9-22%) reduction. Both results were classified as highly statistically significant according to the analysis, meaning that they almost certainly did not arise by chance or through random variation”

https://www.racfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Average_speed_camera_effectiveness_Owen_Ursachi_Allsop_September_2016.pdf p.8



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Problem: **Distracted Driving**

Practical Solution: **Camera Enforcement to identify Distracted Driving and/or Lack of Seat Belts**

Camera enforcement is a mature technology and indeed can be used not just for speeding but for identifying both distracted driving and lack of seat belt wearing by drivers/front seat passengers so increasing the cost/benefit ratio. *(NB. Such integrated technology also frees up our highly demanded police resources. The specific WHS benefit for Highway Patrol is that police vehicles can be used for capture as opposed to chase. This is also a significant safety issue for other road users).*

Problem: **Drunk/Drug Driving/Excessive Speed/Driving in a Manner Dangerous**

Consideration: **Criminal Code - Change 'Dangerous Driving Causing Death' to 'Reckless Murder'**

Where an individual driver acts recklessly, and that action results in the death of another, the law would proscribe the driver as culpable of reckless murder. The offences would carry the same penalties but the community would see the act of killing someone through behaviour that directly puts others in harm's way, as at a far more serious level. It also recognises that continuing with high risk behaviour is a choice, and therefore reinforces that there is no **'accidental'** issue involved.

As the writer of this document, I have lost my own beautiful daughter Ms Sarah Frazer and despite the fact that it is now almost eight years since she was killed, my heart remains broken and I weep for her. I have forgiven the driver who killed my daughter but I have not forgiven his actions which were selfish and indeed heartless.

Ms Leila Abdallah, the mother of three children who were killed by a drunk driver in Oatlands NSW on Saturday 1st February 2020, has also forgiven the driver. But his actions should not be forgiven.

As such, there must be a serious community deterrent for such outrageous actions and changing the severity of the definition reinforces how the community sees such action. *(NB. SARAH is not recommending changes to offence penalties but a change to the offence title to reinforce severity.)*

No one should ever have to lose a loved one in such preventable circumstances.

<https://www.nbnnews.com.au/2020/02/02/four-children-killed-by-alleged-drunk-driver-while-getting-icecream/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/sydney-car-crash-drunk-driver-children-killed-pavement-police-a9313216.html>



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Terms of Reference Point 7.

“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.”

The NRSS Inquiry Recommendation 3, ie: ***“Commit to a minimum \$3 billion a year road safety fund”***, notes that this recommendation was to provide an ***additional funding at 10% of the \$30 billion cost*** of road trauma to the Australian community. The Report specifically notes:

“Given the urgent need to stem the tide of trauma and ultimately eliminate harm on the national network, it is recommended that the Australian Government commits \$3 billion a year from 1 July 2019 to meet the challenge.

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. It would be administered through the new national road safety entity.”

https://www.roadsafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/nrss_inquiry_final_report_september_2018_v2.pdf p.38

The report also recommends the Commonwealth:

“Allocate a minimum 5% of funds for a road safety enablers initiative. This would provide appropriate long-term resourcing to key agencies and non-government organisations with a demonstrated role in accelerating road safety improvements.”

https://www.roadsafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/nrss_inquiry_final_report_september_2018_v2.pdf p.38

If this recommendation had been fully implemented, this would amount to \$150m per annum in new money for road safety enablers. SARAH notes that influencers and enablers are well placed to drive change but are significantly under-resourced.

Without the necessary step change we are committing to ***12,000 people being killed and almost 400,000 being seriously injured over the next decade.***

We know investing in road safety gives our community a cost benefit ratio of greater than one, so it makes good economic sense.

So if our nation is to drive successful change so “everyone gets home safe to their loved ones”, the resources needed must be commensurate with the task at hand. Increased funding is required.