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Mr Pat Conaghan MP  
Committee Chair  
Joint Select Committee on Road Safety  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Conaghan,

Thank you for your letter to Chief Minister Andrew Barr inviting the ACT Government to make a submission to Joint Select Committee on Road Safety to support its inquiry into measures that can be taken to reduce trauma and deaths on Australian roads. I am responding on behalf of the ACT Government as this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

I want to commend the Committee in its worthwhile and timely Terms of Reference. Recent innovations in technology mean that we are now at a point where we can take meaningful action to improve the safety of road users. There are clear benefits to co-ordinating efforts across jurisdictions and levels of government.

The ACT Government continues to work collaboratively with the Federal Government and other jurisdictions to improve road safety outcomes. A good example of this is the work undertaken on the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, which has been agreed by Infrastructure and Transport Ministers. This strategy, rightly, commits governments to the goal of Vision Zero by 2050 and the Safe System approach. I am pleased to inform the Committee that the ACT Government is already progressing many of the matters outlined within the Terms of Reference of this inquiry and the National Road Safety Strategy.

The ACT Government is already committed to Vision Zero – that means no deaths or serious injuries on our road transport network. Vision Zero is the central philosophy guiding the ACT Government's approach to road safety. We believe that it is possible to reduce road deaths and serious injuries to zero, and for the community to avoid the terrible heartbreak and costs associated with them.

In our pursuit of Vision Zero, we have prioritised the Safe System approach to road safety. The Safe System approach focuses on safe speeds, safe vehicles, and safe people and behaviours. The implementation of these initiatives has helped us to achieve an overall trend towards a reduction in fatalities and serious injuries on ACT roads. The ACT continues to maintain a lower number of road fatalities per capita than the national average. However, minimising the risk of road trauma requires constant vigilance, and there is still much more to do to reach zero injuries or fatalities.

### *Safer vehicles*

In recent years, vehicle manufacturers have improved road safety outcomes for occupants through the introduction of technologies such as lane keeping support, adaptive cruise control and blind spot detection. Innovations such as automated vehicles and cooperative intelligent transport systems have the potential to substantially improve road safety outcomes.

We welcome the inclusion of technologies like Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) being made mandatory for all new cars, as the Australian Government has been consulting on. Most new cars also have adaptive cruise control technology. This also has significant potential, in addition to AEB technology, of preventing vehicles from getting too close to each other on all road environments. I wish to draw the committee's attention to adaptive cruise control technology which also automatically detects the speed limit of the road on which the vehicle is travelling and automatically reduces the speed of the vehicle appropriately. These types of technologies are already in use in vehicles on our roads and could be explored as design requirements in the future as the spectrum of vehicle autonomy progresses under design rules in other jurisdictions.

It is important that vehicle standards kept up to date to ensure the supply of the safest vehicles to the Australian market. Although Australia's relative minor share of the global market means that we cannot unilaterally determine new standards, it is important that the Federal Government works to ensure that the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) are kept up to date with international vehicle standards. Delays in harmonisation can mean that safer, more advanced vehicles are directed to other markets. It is critical that the Federal Government updates the ADRs as soon as possible once features such as lane keeping support, adaptive cruise control or autonomous emergency braking become mandatory under standards adopted internationally.

### *Euro VI standards and zero emissions technologies*

In relation to standards, a key issue for the Committee to consider is the Federal Government's ongoing resistance to introducing the Euro VI emissions standards which continues to impact on Australians cost of living, health and safety as well as the environment and the economy. Mandatory emissions standards now cover 80 per cent of the global car market, including the United States, Europe, Japan, Korea, China, India, Canada and Mexico. The refusal by the Australian Government to implement the Euro VI standard in Australia not only has significantly detrimental environmental impacts, but it has also led to Australia becoming a dumping ground for manufacturers of less efficient, costly and polluting vehicles. Vehicles which comply with the latest emissions standards also generally incorporate a range of modern safety features, so the increased uptake of these vehicles would deliver both environmental and safety benefits.

We recognise that there are supply-side issues in relation to domestic manufacturing of appropriately high-quality fuels for such vehicles. However, given the Federal Government's recent commitment to upgrade the infrastructure of Australia's refineries to improve the quality of fuel produced, consideration should be given to mandating at least Euro VI standards for carbon dioxide

emissions on new vehicles as soon as possible. I also note that the European Commission is going even further planning for the introduction of Euro VII standards by 2025.

The refusal to put in place Euro VI(d) standards has placed a significant constraint on the delivery of not only efficient and safe Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles (ICEs), but also affordable and diverse range of zero emissions vehicles (ZEVs) to the Australian market.

#### *The health effects of transport as a road safety issue*

The low take-up of zero emissions vehicles in Australia has a range of consequences, not least of which is the impact on public health. The thousands of deaths caused by transport pollution every year in Australia aren't counted in the national road toll but they are a relevant consideration of this Committee in addressing road safety. I request that the Committee consider the growing recognition of the public health impacts of transport as a road safety issue. Fine particulate matter, like PM2.5, are solid particles suspended in the air, and are so small they can get deep into the lungs and into the bloodstream. Exposure to PM2.5 over long periods can cause adverse health effects including reduced lung function, the development of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and can cause death.

We know that one of the major sources of PM2.5 particulate matter is pollution from ICE vehicles which are also a source of a range of harmful pollutants. Australians have experienced both the best and worst of air pollution over the past two years with bush fires, traffic dropping during lockdown and then increasing beyond pre-pandemic levels and the associated pollution. We now have an opportunity to reduce PM2.5 levels by supporting the take up of zero emissions vehicles and increasing the use of walking, cycling and public transport. Zero emission vehicles will mean a quieter more comfortable ride inside and healthier, quieter streets outside. Reducing the health impacts of ICE vehicles has been recognised by the ACT Government in in our Transport Strategy and is supported by our Zero Emissions Plan for Transport Canberra and Zero Emissions Vehicles Action Plan. The recognition of the public health also goes across party lines and I welcome the NSW Minister for Transport, the Hon. Andrew Constance MP's statement that: "This is the time that we will be judged accordingly for those who deliver a system which scales up EVs and improves our air quality and our public health and at the same time delivers for our environment."

#### *Heavy vehicle safety*

I applaud the Committee's focus on opportunities to achieve better road safety outcomes in the heavy vehicle space. More needs to be done in relation to heavy vehicle safety, particularly regarding crash avoidance. I draw your attention to research undertaken by the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) in 2017, which found that:

- collision partner injury is the predominant injury burden from heavy vehicle crashes, serious injury risk to collision partners with a heavy vehicle being between two and four times greater than for a light vehicle;
- the crashworthiness of all heavy vehicle types is worse than the average for light vehicles, with the exception of large buses;
- heavy vehicle travel in Australasia is predicted to continue to grow faster than other vehicle types, particularly as a proportion of travel in urban areas.

The Committee should also consider the reestablishment of the Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal (the Tribunal). The Tribunal was an independent national body put in place to to adjudicate and research into ways of making the road transportation industry more economical, sustainable, and

safe. It did this primarily by making road safety remuneration orders, approving road transport collective agreements and dealing with certain disputes relating to road transport drivers and their employers. The abolishment of the Tribunal in 2016 came despite the Commonwealth's own review finding that it was significantly improving road safety outcomes. The ACT Government's view is that these safety benefits justify the reintroduction of the Tribunal.

There is a significant link between scheduling pressures, unpaid waiting time, insecure rewards and access to work, and hazardous practices such as speeding, excessive hours and drug use by drivers. Over 200 truck drivers have died since the abolishment of the Tribunal in 2016, which is an undeniably tragic outcome. This tragedy is compounded when this outcome is considered in conjunction with the findings of the MUARC, which makes clear that the impact of these crashes is far broader and felt across our community.

We recognise that work is underway by the Commonwealth to explore options for the roll out of automatic braking systems across Australia's heavy vehicle fleet. We support this work being accelerated to ensure address an area of particular risk for death and injury on Australian roads.

#### *Best practice active travel infrastructure*

It is also becoming increasingly apparent that Australia's cities are not capable of efficiently supporting high volumes of private vehicles, with congestion and gridlock widespread – particularly during peak times. Walking and cycling are efficient modes of transport that can move large numbers of people across dense environments, complementary to public transport and in addition to private vehicles. The benefits of active travel include reduced road congestion and less air pollution.

I encourage the Committee to consider whether more could be done to improve safety outcomes through the provision of best practice design guidance and standards for active travel infrastructure. Active travel networks often interface with road networks and users generally do not have the same safety protections as motorists. The Commonwealth could usefully contribute to improved road safety and uptake of active travel by developing and disseminating improved national standards for best practice and safe road and active travel infrastructure. The Commonwealth also plays an important role in the funding of road projects; there is an opportunity to ensure this incorporates provision for safe and appropriate active travel infrastructure alongside that designed for vehicles. The current provisions of the *National Land Transport Act 2014* may provide a barrier to these types of projects being funded and a framework could be developed for joint-funding of stand-alone active travel projects.

Thank you again for the invitation to make a submission. The ACT Government will read the Committee's report with interest when this is available.

Yours sincerely

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