



**24 August 2021**

Ms Casey Mazzearella  
Inquiry Secretary  
Joint Select Committee on Road Safety  
Department of the House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Mazzearella

**WALGA submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback to this Joint Select Committee on Road Safety. WALGA acknowledges the importance of road safety and the Australian Parliament for establishing this Committee to build on earlier work to inquire into and report on measures that can be taken to reduce trauma and deaths on Australian roads.

WALGA also acknowledges the significant work done<sup>1</sup> at the national level in recent years, such as the establishment of the national Office of Road Safety and the development of a new national road safety strategy.

To position Australia as a leading nation in the elimination of death and serious injury on the roads, further progress and effort is required. I would like to highlight two key areas from WALGA's previous submissions to: the 2018 Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, the 2020 Joint Select Committee and the 2021 Draft National Road Safety Strategy. These matters address the objectives<sup>2</sup> of this Committee and focus on two of the recommendations from the 2018 Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy that require additional attention:

- *Invest in road safety focused infrastructure, safe system and mobility partnerships with state, territory and local governments that accelerate the elimination of high-risk roads (Recommendation 9).*
- *Make road safety a genuine part of business as usual within Commonwealth, state, territory and local government (Recommendation 10).*

Towards these goals WALGA recommends greater effort to:

1. Foster strong strategic leadership and build authentic operational partnerships, and
2. Invest in research to build on existing programs to future-proof safety-focused road infrastructure improvements.

<sup>1</sup> [Final response NRSS Inquiry \(officeofroadsafety.gov.au\)](https://www.officeofroadsafety.gov.au/)

<sup>2</sup> [Resolution of appointment – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au/)

## 1. Leadership and partnerships

Despite being recognised as global best practice the Safe System Approach has not been fully embraced in Australia. Bold leadership is needed for genuine and widespread adoption of a systems approach, with safe system principles embedded in a way that avoids the cornerstone silos of the previous strategy period and the traditional 'fix-the-driver' approach which continues to dominate the management of road safety in Australia.

Coupled with this are the inherent and limiting flaws associated with the 'shared responsibility' concept that has universally been adopted in national, state and territory road safety strategies. WALGA challenges this on the basis that shared responsibility assumes equal capacity and dilutes accountability. Addressing these flaws will be necessary to place appropriately more responsibility and accountability with the system designers than the users of the road transport system.

As a starting point there is an opportunity to establish an authentic and inclusive partnership between the three spheres of government and the respective operational agencies responsible for roads. A united focus by the collective responsible owners is required towards the incremental elimination of the serious crash types on Australian roads, that from a community perspective are all a part of one network.

Local Governments are diverse in their needs, capacity and capability. As road managers Local Governments face greater challenges than other spheres of government in working towards transforming the local road network to be central to a safe system. These challenges include: the sheer size and extent of the task; the legacy of aged, generally lower standard road infrastructure that is injury-tolerant in design; and deficient funding for maintenance let alone safety upgrades. Some of these challenges were highlighted in the Review of National Road Safety Governance Arrangements<sup>3</sup>, in particular the imbalance in funding available to Local Governments to manage the majority of Australia's roads.

Support for Local Governments will be critical, as is recognised in the Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. However, an authentic partnership approach is needed rather than the top-down prescriptive manner described in the Strategy. Local Governments should be empowered and enabled to contribute through:

- mutual respect and genuine engagement;
- creating a culture of inclusivity and co-design;
- regular collaboration for coordinated policies and programs; and
- the sharing of road safety resources (knowledge, funding, data, etc).

## 2. Research and development of road safety infrastructure programs

WALGA acknowledges the recent Commonwealth investment to improve the safety of the road network including the Road Safety Program, providing \$3 billion over three years from 2020-21. It is acknowledged that this program has been designed for fast roll out of proven lifesaving treatments. This investment is largely focussed on the National and State highway network, and even within that on those sections that are in a suitable condition to benefit from relatively low cost mass action treatments. As this work is completed and results evaluated there is the opportunity for the work of this Committee to further drive effective implementation of effective measures that are based on best practice, Safe System principles.

In relation to further investment in road infrastructure WALGA seeks continued safety-focused funding for the local road network in conjunction with new investment in research and development that will build on existing programs to design a more sophisticated safe-system aligned program as an evolutionary step for Black Spot programs.

<sup>3</sup> [Review of National Road Safety Governance Arrangements](#)

The Australian Government's Black Spot program is highly regarded by Local Governments. It remains one of a few safety-focused sources of funding for local roads and though greatly valued there may be opportunities to develop the criteria and methodology in an evolutionary manner to better support not only the reactive treatment of crash sites/lengths but also proactive mass action type treatments, ie beyond Benefit Cost Ratios to safe system transformations of the network. For example, model-based methods such as the Empirical Bayes statistical method (Portugal) cited by Meuleners and Fraser<sup>4</sup> as "state-of-the-art".

Research should also consider how differentiation of criteria, methodologies or even alternative complementary programs might more appropriately address the gap in safety performance on rural and remote roads, for example funding for low-cost treatments such as lines and signs (taken for granted in large urban centres) to help bring rural and remote roads closer to the current (minimum) standard and ultimately towards a safe system.

Without changes it is likely to become increasingly difficult to identify sites or lengths that meet the criteria, which is based upon reacting to relatively random events across such a large network rather than eliminating the crash types that result in death and serious injury.

Yours sincerely

**Nick Sloan**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

<sup>4</sup> Meuleners L, and Fraser M, *Review of the WA State Black Spot Program: a literature review of Australian and International Black Spot Programs*, June 2008.