

## Joint Select Committee on Road Safety: Answers to Questions on Notice

The George Institute for Global Health has partnered with the Transurban Road Safety Centre at the Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) and the School of Public Health and Community Health at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney.

### **Question 1: Data: What nationally consistent data relating to vehicle accidents would you like to see collected, and which body should collect the data? Should the data be made public?**

We believe there is a need for two types of nationally consistent data to inform, monitor and evaluate road safety countermeasures and policy.

The first is mass crash data collected at a population/census level, and the second is in-depth crash data collected through a uniform sampling scheme. Beyond crash data, there are other types of data important for informing, monitoring and evaluating road safety countermeasures that are currently lacking. These include exposure data, and data around use of protective equipment. The newly established federal office of road safety seems an appropriate body to coordinate these data. Full de-identified datasets should be available for research purposes, and summaries and any reports arising from this data should be made publicly available and in a timely way.

Currently, mass crash data is collected by state governments via police reported crashes. While there are some commonalities in the variables across different jurisdictions, there are a number of non-uniformities that currently limit easy collation of all state-based databases into a single national collection. There is a need to define a common set of variables and implement common definitions to allow a national compilation of police reported data. However, the single greatest limitation of currently available police reported crash data is the lack of inclusion of robust outcome data i.e. consistent and reliable information about injury. This information is routinely collected through hospital admission data, again by individual states. A number of states have recognised the need to link hospital data with police reported crash data, and this has been an important step forward. For any national compilation of crash data to be really useful it must include both crash detail and injury outcome, and linkage approaches currently being used in a number of jurisdictions might facilitate this. Linked police reported crash and hospital data also allows for better routine collection of demographic data. While the linkage approach fails to achieve 100% linkage rates. A nationally consistent set of linked hospital and crash records would be far more useful than what is currently occurring.

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The second is the limitation of currently available data is the absence of exposure data. For motor vehicles, this could easily be collected by recording odometer readings in registration data and linking registration data to the hospital and crash record. Other methods are required to be developed for other road users, and this should also be an important consideration if there are to be new data collection initiatives implemented.

While good mass crash data is essential for examining temporal trends, it is impossible for this level of data to contain sufficient information to understand in detail failures of the safe system. In-depth crash investigation is the only way this type of detail can be collected. There is a need to establish a national network or collection of this level of detailed data for fatal and high priority serious injury crashes. Currently state-based police organisations do conduct detailed forensic investigations of most fatal and serious injury crashes for the purposes of identifying whether any charges should be laid and if so who should be charged. Police briefs covering these detailed investigations are often rich sources of information about system failures but currently there is no routine collection of the information contained in these reports. The fact that police in most jurisdictions are undertaking these investigations also provides an opportunity to collect additional detail relevant to understanding system failures, but this is often beyond the scope of the police investigation. If legislative powers allowed, there is opportunity to collect safe system level in-depth information by including road safety investigations as an adjunct to these investigations and collating this information in a nationally consistent way. Benefits of in-depth data are that it can provide detailed information on factors such as the use and performance of protective equipment, vehicle maintenance, role of impairment, speed and infrastructure etc in the crash. While this is useful for understanding system failures, for good countermeasure and policy development and evaluation it is important to know the prevalence of these factors across the entire community. Historically, there were routine collection of data related to observed seat belt use for example, but this type of data is no longer routinely collected. Strong consideration should be given to re-instating this type of data collection and extending this to routine collection of prevalence data across other known risk factors.

**Question 2: Targets: The 2018 Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-20 Report recommends the Commonwealth and states commit to an interim target of vision zero for all major capital city CBD areas, and high volume highways by 2030. Does your organisation support the Commonwealth and state governments adopting this target?**

We support the adoption of vision zero for all major capital city CBD areas and high volume highway as soon as possible.

We also believe it is important to set targets for action across the entire network moving towards vision zero across the whole system. This is particularly relevant on roads where injury burden is high such as on rural roads outside of major capital city CBDs and high volume highways. In addition, in areas outside of those noted above, we believe it important to set targets related to actions that we know will reduce risk of death and serious injury such as use of seat belts and other protective equipment, impaired driving, speed management and infrastructure treatment.

**Question 3: Speed Management: Does your organisation support the installation of point to point speed cameras on all Commonwealth funded roads in the future?**

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**Should the Commonwealth Government make the allocation of funding to the states conditional on this commitment being met?**

We support installation of point-to-point speed cameras on all Commonwealth funded roads for all vehicles, and believe allocation of funding should be conditional on this commitment being met.

We also believe it is important to extend this approach of conditional funding to other areas of speed management such as speed limit setting. Appropriate speed limits for existing and new infrastructure are at the very core of the safe system approach and the Commonwealth funding should be conditional on States ensuring that an appropriate and consistent approach to speed limit setting is taken across their entire jurisdictions. This includes 30km/h limits in urban areas with high levels of mixed road users, and 70km limits on non-divided regional roads where infrastructure treatments cannot be implemented to ensure safer higher speed limits.

**Question 4: Road Standards: To what safety standard should all Commonwealth funded road projects be built? Should funding for projects be conditional on a particular safety standard being met?**

All Commonwealth funded roads should be built to a nationally agreed world's best practice safe system standard and all funding should be conditional on this safety standard being met.

We also believe it is important that the federal government shows leadership in strongly encouraging safe system approaches to existing infrastructure. There should also be a nationally agreed world's best practice safe system standard for infrastructure treatments and where such treatments are not possible, speed limits should be set appropriately as noted above. Further, innovative funding strategies should be explored to facilitate low socio-economic local government areas achieve the same level of safety standard in existing roads as the rest of the road network.

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