

GOVERNMENT STATUS REPORT

Vehicle Safety Standards Branch

Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development

AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

Australia is in the fourth year of a co-ordinated national strategy on road safety, and continues a downward trend in road crash fatalities. However, the trend is not consistent across all road user categories, leaving a number of areas for continued improvement.

Figure 1 - National Fatality Rates and Road User Type

THE NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY 2011-2020

The National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020 was released on 20 May 2011 and presents a 10-year plan to reduce the annual numbers of both deaths and serious injuries on Australian roads by at least 30 per cent. Figure 2 shows the target in conjunction with current fatality rates.

Figure 2 - National Road Safety Strategy

The strategy outlines broad directions for the future of Australian road safety, planned initiatives for the first three years and a range of options for further consideration as the strategy progresses. The initiatives and options are set out in four key areas—Safe Roads, Safe Speeds, Safe Vehicles and Safe People.

The strategy included a requirement for a thorough review to be carried out after three years. The review was conducted by Austroads in 2014 under Terms of Reference approved by Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory Transport Ministers. These called for:

- An assessment of progress made during the first three years of the NRSS (2011–2013)

- A review of the ongoing suitability of the ‘high level’ content of the NRSS

- Identification of implementation priorities and key actions for the next three years.

The review was largely informed by an independent study commissioned from the Centre for Automotive Safety Research(CASR) at the University of Adelaide.

The main findings of the review were:

- Good statistical progress was made in the first three years of the NRSS, as measured by overall changes in annual road fatality counts. The number of deaths in 2013 represented a 16.5% reduction relative to the strategy baseline period (2008–2010).

Fatality trends were less positive for certain sub-groups of road users, particularly cyclists, motorcyclists and older drivers.

Progress in reducing serious injury numbers was difficult to determine because of the lack of reliable, nationally consistent, non-fatal crash data. Available hospital data provided some evidence that serious injury levels had not declined in concert with the general downward trend in deaths.

The review found that progress in implementing the 59 'first steps' actions in the NRSS was varied, though there was evidence that most had been actively progressed to some extent and that there had been a number of clear achievements. Progress had been particularly strong in the vehicle safety area.

The review concluded that the 'high-level' content of the NRSS – its guiding vision, targets, key directions and Safe System principles – remain valid and appropriate for the 10-year strategy.

The review identified a range of 'priority areas' where road safety progress appears to have been lagging or where there is opportunity to make significant future gains. These areas included a mix of high-risk road user groups, countermeasure priorities and capacity building activities, and are discussed in some detail in the report prepared by CASR.

The review also concluded that the next phase of NRSS delivery should be guided by a more concise action plan than the initial 'first steps' agenda: it should focus on issues that clearly warrant national attention and that can be addressed through specific national actions.

Action Plan 2015–2017

The main outcome of the review is the three-year Action Plan described in this document.

In developing the content of the Action Plan, an over-arching principle was to focus on actions that will deliver or support significant long-term improvements in the safety of the road transport system – especially through strategic investment in infrastructure safety, vehicle safety and capacity building work.

This gives rise to some important qualifications about the content of the plan:

The Action Plan is not intended to directly target every higher-risk road user or community group identified in the NRSS review. By focusing on actions with system-wide impacts, it is expected that all groups will benefit from the plan.

The Action Plan is not intended to replace the content of the NRSS, but to ensure that national (or nationally-agreed) efforts are focused on strategically important initiatives. Many of the original 'first steps' actions in the NRSS remain important and will continue to be progressed at a jurisdictional level.

The Action Plan covers a number of broad categories:

Prioritizing our investments in infrastructure;

Improving the safety of Australia's vehicle fleet;

Encouraging safer road use; and

Advancing the safe system.

Improvements in the safety of vehicles on Australian roads are therefore fundamental to the Plan and particularly seek to implement priority vehicle safety standards (through the Australian Design Rules) and to accelerate the market uptake of vehicle technologies with significant safety potential.

The specific regulatory actions listed are to consider the mandating of:

Pole side impact occupant protection standards for new vehicles;

Antilock brake systems for new motorcycles; and

Electronic stability control for new heavy vehicles.

Targeted new technologies include Autonomous Emergency Braking, Lane Departure Warning and Intelligent Speed Advisory systems. These are to be promoted through collaboration between ANCAP (the Australasian New Car Assessment Program), individual jurisdictions (including the Commonwealth and States and Territories) and other stakeholders.

More detail on Australia's National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 and Action Plan 2015-2017 are available at https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/national_road_safety_strategy/index.aspx.

ANCAP

The Australian Government continues to be a member and major supporter of the Australasian New Car Assessment Program, with financial support being confirmed at least until 2015-16. ANCAP is currently in a period of transition, with testing and rating protocols to be aligned with those of Euro NCAP from 2018. ANCAP ratings remain significant in Australian consumer choice, with 81 percent of light vehicles sold carrying a 5-star rating (December 2014). In this period, an ANCAP rating was available for 92 percent of light vehicles sold.

REVIEW OF THE MOTOR VEHICLE STANDARDS ACT 1989

On 16 January 2014 the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, the Hon Jamie Briggs MP, announced a comprehensive review of the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989, with a view to reducing regulatory costs to business and individuals and improving the safety and environmental performance of road motor vehicles.

The last major review of the *Act* was conducted in 1999. Since this time there has been significant change in the domestic and global environment of vehicle manufacturing, in vehicle technologies and in purchasing preferences of consumers. A public consultation process was conducted in late 2013 to seek feedback from interested parties on the need for a review and on the currency and operation of the legislation.

The review is currently in progress and has involved a public submission process along with consultations on possible future options for the Act. An Options Discussion paper was prepared and a number of public workshops were conducted in order to facilitate the process. The public submissions are being used to develop recommendations to Government and to prepare a Regulation Impact Statement for any proposed changes to vehicle regulation.

More detail on the review is available at https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/national_road_safety_strategy/index.aspx.

HARMONISATION OF ADRS WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Pending the outcome of the review, the Australian Government has accelerated harmonization of the Australian Design Rules (ADRs) with international standards, in particular by application of a further round of UN Regulations in anticipation of the advent of International Whole Vehicle Type Approval.

Application of UN Regulations means that in effect relevant ADRs are automatically updated when UN Regulations are updated, providing immediate access to the Australian market to vehicles featuring the latest safety technology.

Australia is committed to an international system for developing vehicle standards and is active participant of the UN World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations.

REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS

The ADR program works towards an agreed set of priorities in line with international regulations through UN WP29 activities and also Australia's National Road Safety Strategy 2011-20.

Brake Assist Systems (BAS)

In November 2013, Australia mandated BAS for light passenger vehicles and light commercial vehicles. Requirements will apply to new model vehicles from November 2015, to all new light passenger vehicles from November 2016 and all new light commercial vehicles from November 2017.

BAS has been shown to reduce the number and severity of crashes involving vulnerable road users, but can have broader application to other types of crashes where braking is a factor.

Electronic Stability Control (ESC)

In 2009 Australia mandated ESC for light passenger vehicles. Requirements applied from November 2011 to new model vehicles and from November 2013 to all new vehicles.

In November 2013, Australia extended requirements for ESC to light commercial vehicles. As for BAS, these requirements will apply from November 2015 to new model vehicles and from November 2017 to all new vehicles.

Antilock Brake Systems (ABS) and the National Heavy Vehicle Braking Strategy (NHVBS)

Australia has diverse range of heavy vehicles and some heavy vehicle combinations that are not common in other countries. It is therefore important to ensure that braking technologies are compatible and suited to the combinations used in Australia, and the Australian road environment.

The NHVBS was released in 2008 and has been incorporated into the NRSS. Under Phase I of the NHVBS, Australia has mandated ABS for heavy trucks and buses and ABS or load proportioning brake systems for heavy trailers. Requirements have applied to new model vehicles from July 2014 and to new vehicles from January 2015. As part of these requirements:

Trucks and buses equipped for towing must have facilities to power Electronic Braking Systems (EBS) (such as ABS/ESC) for the trailer, as well as provide the correct signaling for EBS operation where fitted.

Trailers with rear couplings must provide wiring suitable to transmit ABS/ESC/EBS functions to follow-on trailers.

There are expected to be significant safety benefits resulting from these changes.

Pole Side Impact

Vehicle occupant side impact fatalities account for around 20% of the road toll in a number of studied countries for example: Australia, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea and the United States). Australia proposed development of a Global Technical Regulation (GTR) on Pole Side Impact in 2010 and chaired the informal working group that developed the GTR.

GTR 14 on Pole Side Impact was adopted by Working Party 29 on 13 November 2013. The GTR was subsequently transposed into a UN Regulation, which was adopted in November 2014.

EuroNCAP also introduced test requirements based on the GTR on 1 January 2015, showing how regulatory and non-regulatory approaches can work effectively together.

Australia has commenced the domestic rulemaking process, in line with the NRSS and Action Plan 2015-2017. A Regulatory Impact Statement expected to be released shortly.

The performance requirements of the GTR (and UN Regulation) will reduce vehicle occupant injury risk (particularly head injury risk) in pole side impact crashes as well as vehicle-to-vehicle and other side impact crashes.

ABS for motorcycles

The case for mandating ABS for motorcycles is being considered, in line with the NRSS and Action Plan 2015-2017. Research on the real-world effectiveness of ABS in reducing road trauma is underway in conjunction with the Victorian Government in Australia. This research is expected to be finalized by mid- 2015.

ESC and the NHVBS

The case for mandating ESC for heavy vehicles is being considered, in line with Phase II of the NHVBS and the NRSS and Action Plan 2015-2017. Consultation is underway and the work is expected to be finalized by early 2016.