

## **REVIEW OF ROAD SAFETY ISSUES FOR FUTURE INQUIRY**

**Organisation:** Australian Road Research Board

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*In reply please quote :*

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17 September 2018

Mr Greg Aplin MP

Chair

Staysafe (Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety)

c/- [staysafe@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:staysafe@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Sir,

### **Review of road safety issues for future inquiry**

The Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) is the Australia's national transport research organisation with almost 60 years' experience in road safety research, policy and guidance in best practice road traffic management. ARRB has recognised industry experts located in almost every Australian State and Territory, working collaboratively with road practitioners in state and local government, the vehicle technology industry, and universities and research institutes operating in this field. This breadth of coverage and depth of expertise allows ARRB to bring together the best that Australia has to offer to deliver a safer road transport future.

ARRB applaud the call by Staysafe for submissions into potential road safety inquiry topics, and we welcome the opportunity to contribute to Parliament gaining a better understanding where there is a need for action in this vital area.

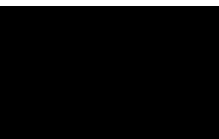
Our submission to Staysafe for future topics of inquiry seeks NSW develop and implement an independent and multi-disciplinary approach toward the investigation of road crashes. It is our view that this approach should be established separate from that currently applied by the NSW Police Force and Roads and Maritime, since we propose this process be an objective examination of where the road transport system, across all the Safe System pillars, has failed. It is then proposed that the findings of these investigations be reported to an appropriate agency in a manner that inform government and the community about the factors of the crash to engage an appropriate understanding and response.

We believe if this approach is implemented it would have the potential to contribute to a sustained reduction in road trauma on NSW roads through a better understanding about the cause and effect of road crashes.

We note the Terms of Reference for this inquiry and have prepared our submission to address the five key questions listed. We hope that the Committee agree that the topic we have submitted is important and worthy of inquiry by Staysafe.

We welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss our submission and how it may be developed as an inquiry topic.

Yours sincerely



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**YOUR NATIONAL TRANSPORT  
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**Submission:** NSW should adopt an independent and multi-disciplinary approach toward the investigation of road crashes, one that examines a crash incident in a scientific approach, encompassing the principles of the Safe System approach and investigating each of the Safe System pillars to understand the factors contributing to the cause of a crash and the severity of injury to the road users involved.

*a) Why the issue is important?*

When a fatal or serious injury crash occurs on NSW roads, the primary response for investigating the circumstances of the incident is vested with the NSW Police Force. The scope of investigation by the Police is largely guided by their role in identifying the 'at fault party', and where the actions of this party conflict with the law, preparing a brief of evidence for consideration by the appropriate legal prosecutor.

While this approach may serve justice, it does not adequately inform an understanding of the root causes of road crashes or where failures in the road transport system occurred and lead to the death and serious injury of road users. An improved knowledge of the root causes and failures of the system would greatly assist government and road practitioners to prevent similar crashes elsewhere on the NSW network.

An investigation of a road crash by the NSW Roads and Maritime and, on rare occasions the local council, typically happen well after the incident has occurred. Evidence at the scene and contemporaneous understanding of the circumstances of the crash have often been removed, or diminish with time, and the perspective applied is almost exclusively an examination of the road environment, which is just one part of the system.

While professional in their approach, RMS and council road practitioners undertaking these investigations lack formal training and experience in crash investigation, and typically they bring just a single perspective to the scene, i.e. that of the road authority. Additionally, the potential for a road crash to lead to a claim of negligence in a civil liability case, causes investigations by the road authority, or their legal and technical representatives, to become legally privileged and adopt a defensive nature rather than provide a transparent and objective, system focus that provides an understanding of a crash and knowledge to prevent future similar incidents and road trauma.

*b) Why this should be investigated by Staysafe?*

Staysafe has a proven ability to look at a road safety issue from across the spectrum of government and non-government stakeholders and to develop recommendations that identify action that go beyond a single agency.

A change to the current approach of investigation and reporting of road crashes will require a commitment from Government to engage Police, RMS and local government in being a part of an investigation team rather than separate investigating entities with a singular focus.

*c) How Government policy and practice will be improved?*

If Staysafe support the proposition for an independent and multi-disciplinary approach to the investigation of road crashes that apply a scientific, Safe System approach, then road safety policy and practice in NSW would be better informed, with lessons taken from crashes and a system-based review to prevent crashes occurring rather than reacting to them.

*d) How the issue supports the NSW or national road safety strategy?*

Understanding the reasons why crashes occur, where the deficiencies in the road transport system exist and what action is required to address them will assist NSW to deliver its State Priority Target to reduce road fatalities by at least 30 per cent from 2008–2010 levels by 2021, and the vision (or aspirational road safety target) of zero deaths and serious injuries by 2056 (NSW Road Safety Plan 2021).

It will also aid NSW contributing to the priority actions listed in the National Road Safety Action Plan, and importantly it will support alignment with key recommendations contained in the recently released Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011 - 2020, received by the Deputy Prime Minister last week.

e) *What benefits the community will enjoy?*

Meeting these targets will require a whole of government approach, encompassing the Police, RMS, local government, health, education, and social services, as well as collaboration with non-government stakeholders including the vehicle industry, educators, and the community generally.

With improved evidence, better policy, and targeted program funding, the community will see a reduction in death and serious injury from road trauma.