

**Submission
No 4**

**INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE ROAD TRAUMA IN REGIONAL NSW CAUSED
BY SPEEDING, FATIGUE, DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING**

Name: Mr Greg Peak

Date Received: 31 May 2025

SUBMISSION TO THE NSW PARLIAMENT

Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety

Inquiry: Interventions to Reduce Road Trauma in Regional NSW Caused by Speeding, Fatigue, Drink and Drug Driving

Submitted by:

Greg Peak

Director, Peak Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd

Date: 31 May 2025

1. Introduction

As an engineering professional working across diverse communities in New South Wales, I have seen firsthand the devastating impact of road trauma in rural and regional settings. This submission responds to the Committee's terms of reference by offering informed commentary and recommendations grounded in engineering practice, field observation, and evidence-based best practice. My focus is on addressing the underlying causes of crashes involving speeding, fatigue, and substance-impaired driving — particularly where regional conditions and infrastructure gaps are contributing factors.

2. (a) Regional NSW-Specific Crash Factors, Characteristics and Demographics

Regional NSW is disproportionately affected by serious road trauma for several interrelated reasons:

- **Travel distances and higher speed zones** result in longer periods of sustained driving and higher crash impact severity.
- **Delayed emergency response times** due to geographic isolation reduce survival rates in serious collisions.
- **Vehicle types and age** differ from metropolitan areas, with higher usage of older vehicles lacking modern safety features and heavier reliance on utes and light trucks.
- **Crash data consistently identifies males aged 17–25 and drivers over 70** as overrepresented in fatal incidents in regional NSW.
- **Inadequate infrastructure**, such as narrow road shoulders, lack of overtaking lanes, poor surface conditions, and insufficient lighting, further increases crash risk.

3. (b) Effectiveness of Current Strategies

Existing programs have had mixed results in regional areas:

- **Police blitzes and double demerit periods** offer temporary deterrence but lack sustainable impact on habitual offenders.

- **Driver Reviver programs** provide valuable rest opportunities, but their availability is limited, and many rely on volunteer operation with inconsistent visibility and accessibility.
- **Roadside drug and alcohol testing** is less frequent in regional NSW due to limited police resources, meaning impaired drivers face a lower perceived risk of being caught.
- **Mobile speed cameras and enforcement measures** often do not provide adequate coverage in vast regional areas. Additionally, there is a perception that such measures are revenue-focused rather than safety-driven.
- **Statewide education campaigns** often fail to resonate with rural communities and may not reflect regional values, concerns, or communication styles. More locally-targeted initiatives are needed.

4. (c) Proposed Measures to Reduce Road Trauma

A successful approach requires both physical infrastructure improvements and behavioural change interventions:

Infrastructure Interventions

- **Widen shoulders and install audio-tactile rumble strips** to reduce run-off-road crashes and improve vehicle control margins.
- **Construct overtaking lanes and install median barriers** on high-speed corridors to prevent head-on collisions and improve traffic flow.
- **Upgrade rural intersections** to address visibility limitations, improve lighting, and ensure signage is adequate and well-maintained.
- **Improve, upgrade, and add roadside rest areas** throughout regional NSW. Fatigue is a significant contributor to trauma, and rest opportunities must be practical, safe, and readily accessible. Recommended actions include:
 - Constructing new rest areas at regular intervals (approximately every 80–100 km).
 - Refurbishing existing rest stops with shade, toilets, lighting, water, and rubbish facilities.
 - Clear advance signage to alert drivers of upcoming rest opportunities.
 - Dedicated parking zones for heavy vehicles to avoid congestion and increase usability for long-distance freight drivers and the general public.

Behavioural and Enforcement Measures

- **Expand regional drug and alcohol roadside testing**, particularly during high-risk times such as holiday periods and evenings.
- **Subsidise fatigue monitoring systems** in commercial and public transport fleets to help detect and prevent impaired driving due to drowsiness.
- **Introduce compulsory refresher driver education** for young drivers and senior citizens, focusing on regional hazards, fatigue awareness, and safe speed practices.

- **Fund community-led education campaigns** tailored to the cultural and social context of regional communities. Messaging should be delivered by respected local voices and use region-specific data and case studies to make safety issues relatable.

Technology and Data-Driven Approaches

- **Use of telematics data** from fleet vehicles, insurers, and transport operators to identify high-risk routes and times.
 - **Trial of AI-assisted road hazard monitoring**, using dashcams and mobile data to flag locations for targeted maintenance, speed zone review, or safety upgrades.
-

5. (d) Implementation of Auditor-General's 2023 Recommendations

The 2023 *Performance Audit Report: Regional Road Safety* made several important recommendations, particularly regarding program accountability, coordination, and the tracking of safety outcomes. Progress on these recommendations has been limited. Key implementation issues include:

- **Fragmented governance** across Transport for NSW, NSW Police, and local councils, with unclear leadership for road safety initiatives.
- **Inadequate funding and capability** at the local council level to deliver road upgrades identified as critical in crash data.
- **Lack of transparency and performance reporting**, making it difficult to evaluate whether safety investments are having the intended effect.

I strongly support the full implementation of the Auditor-General's recommendations, especially the development of a single, coordinated road safety strategy with measurable targets for rural crash reduction.

6. (e) Other Related Matters

Several additional issues must be considered:

- **Aboriginal road safety** requires culturally appropriate and community-delivered programs. Road rules education, licensing assistance, and vehicle safety awareness need targeted investment.
 - **Late-night transport access** in regional towns remains limited, which directly increases drink and drug driving risk. Pilot programs for subsidised ride-share services or community buses should be explored.
 - **Mental health challenges**, particularly in areas affected by drought, floods, or economic hardship, can increase risk-taking behaviour on roads. Integrated services that link mental health, substance use support, and road safety messaging could reduce trauma in vulnerable communities.
-

7. Conclusion

Reducing road trauma in regional NSW requires a strategic, multi-agency response that recognises the distinct conditions and behaviours present outside metropolitan areas. Infrastructure upgrades, targeted enforcement, community-based education, and improved fatigue management are essential components of this effort. I welcome the Committee's inquiry and would be pleased to provide further assistance or evidence if required.

Submitted by:

Greg Peak

BEng (Civil), MIEAust CPEng

Director, Peak Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd

