

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


Organisation: Central NSW Joint Organisation

Date Received: 22 July 2025

Inquiry into the interventions to reduce road trauma in regional NSW caused by speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving

22 July 2025

**CENTRAL NSW
JOINT ORGANISATION**



Bathurst
Blayney
Cabonne
Cowra
Forbes
Lachlan
Lithgow
Oberon
Orange
Parkes
Weddin

22 July 2025

Mr Greg Warren
The Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety
Parliament House
6 Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Via email: staysafe@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Warren,

Re: Inquiry into the interventions to reduce road trauma in regional NSW caused by speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving

Central NSW Joint Organisation speaks with a unified voice for its collective priorities. This region has a proud history of working collaboratively, representing over 180,000 people covering an area of more than 53,000sq kms comprising the local government areas of its membership- Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Weddin.

Tasked with intergovernmental cooperation, leadership and prioritisation, CNSWJO has consulted with its stakeholders to identify key strategic regional priorities. The CNSWJO Strategic Plan can be found here - www.centraljo.nsw.gov.au.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Inquiry into interventions to reduce road trauma in regional NSW caused by speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving.

We note the [Terms of Reference](#) for the inquiry. While individual member councils may choose to respond directly to items a – d, this submission reflects broader regional priorities and responds to item e; any other related matters. This submission is informed by policy developed in the region and highlights systemic challenges including infrastructure condition, freight pressures, funding limitations, coordination barriers, and the absence of regional planning tools, all of which influence the environment in which road trauma occurs.

Road condition and maintenance backlog

Central NSW councils are responsible for managing over 16,000 kilometres of local and regional roads, much of which is vital for freight movement, school transport, tourism, and emergency response.

The Central NSW JO speaks for over 180,000 people covering an area of more than 53,000sq kms comprising of Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, and Weddin.

Across the region, councils have identified significant road renewal and maintenance backlogs, highlighting both the scale of the task and the constraints faced in meeting safety and service expectations. These local insights align with broader statewide trends identified in recent IPWEA and NRMA reports:

- The 2025 IPWEA Asset Benchmarking report estimated replacement cost of road and bridge assets reported in poor to very poor condition is \$6.3 billion - [IPWEA's Road management Report 2025](#).
- In 2023–24, councils spent an estimated \$2.9 billion on road and bridge infrastructure, yet maintaining current service levels total \$3.1 billion per year, leaving an annual funding shortfall of \$164 million, or approximately 5% of required investment. Over 20 years, this translates to a cumulative gap of \$3.3 billion. Without intervention, this shortfall is likely to accelerate asset deterioration and diminish service levels – [IPWEA's Road management Report 2025](#).
- The backlog of funding required by NSW councils to maintain their roads to a safe standard has jumped over 20 per cent to \$3.4 billion. The backlog of funding they require increased from \$2.8 billion last year to \$3.4 billion – [NRMA's annual council backlog report](#).

The significant maintenance backlog across regional NSW has implications such as poor road surface conditions, ageing assets, and natural disasters damaging infrastructure. This is particularly concerning on local roads heavily used for freight, school transport, and essential travel, as highlighted in these recent reports.

Freight and Modal Shift

More than 80% of freight in Central NSW is moved by road, placing growing pressure on local infrastructure, much of which was not designed for today's freight task.

Growth in mining, agriculture, and nationally significant infrastructure projects, including the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone, Inland Rail, and the Parkes Special Activation Precinct, are increasing this freight load. Councils welcome these opportunities but lack the investment needed to upgrade and maintain the infrastructure required to safely support them. Many local roads now function as regional freight corridors without the funding or design standards to match.

It is the gap between this growing national freight task and the local resources available to deliver and maintain the infrastructure that supports it that must be addressed in a sustainable way. Councils are already working within constrained budgets and resources, and the compounding impacts of natural disasters have made the challenge even harder.

Strategic investment in rail freight and regional passenger services could reduce heavy vehicle use on local roads, alleviate safety risks, and deliver cost efficiencies over time. Councils in the region have repeatedly called for support to establish or reinstate rail services that can reduce reliance on road transport.

The absence of co-designed investment planning means local councils often carry disproportionate costs for infrastructure supporting state and national freight.

Disaster Impacts and Recovery

From 2019–2023, Central NSW councils recorded over ~\$440 million in damage to transport infrastructure alone from storms and flooding. Some councils faced recovery costs up to eight times their annual infrastructure budgets, all while managing repeat damage from overlapping events.

Compounding damage, slow recovery funding, and limited eligibility for betterment under current funding processes mean that roads are being rebuilt to the same pre-disaster standards; standards that

have proven insufficient. Councils have limited capacity to factor resilience into repairs without access to flexible funding mechanisms and advanced planning support.

These impacts reduce councils' capacity to address safety hazards, stretch available resources across competing priorities, and lead to longer-term infrastructure vulnerability contributing to:

- continued infrastructure degradation,
- strain on council budgets and disruption to maintenance schedules, and
- overall increased road safety risk.

Planning and Funding Limitations

CNSWJO notes the impending development of the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (SRITP) and accompanying Central West Corridor White Paper by Transport for NSW. To be effective, this must be implemented with:

- a clear and transparent accountability framework,
- sufficient resourcing, including a dedicated and long-term funding mechanism,
- a genuine co-design process that embeds local government leadership in implementation, and
- regular review and adaptation cycles to ensure responsiveness to changing conditions and local needs.

Without these supporting elements, these initiatives risk becoming shelf wear without the influence or investment required to address systemic safety and resilience challenges.

Current infrastructure funding programs are often:

- competitive rather than needs based,
- misaligned with local capacity and timing, and
- burdened by administration, short delivery windows and siloed priorities.

Cost-shifting, including the Emergency Services Levy, continues to divert council resources from core infrastructure maintenance. Local Government NSW (LGNSW) recently released their cost shifting report which highlighted the estimated cost shifting to councils reached \$1.5b in 2023/24, which equates to an average of \$497.40 per ratepayer per year, and up to \$571.10 for large rural councils. The estimated cumulative burden of this cost shifting practice has imposed more than \$11.31b onto councils over the last decade.

An improved and more collaborative approach to infrastructure funding is needed to ensure regional councils can keep their roads safe and fit-for-purpose.

Road Safety Officers

Councils acknowledge the important role that Local Road Safety Officers (RSOs) can play in improving driver behaviour and community safety. However, current arrangements often restrict RSOs to priorities mandated by the state, which may not reflect local risk profiles or council needs. This misalignment has discouraged some councils from participating in the program. A more flexible, better-resourced model that enables RSOs to support both local and state priorities could significantly enhance the program's effectiveness.

Summary

To reduce road trauma in regional NSW, interventions must go beyond behaviour change campaigns and enforcement. The physical condition of the road network, the scale of freight, and the impact of recurring natural disasters are all central to safety outcomes.

CNSWJO welcomes further collaboration with the NSW Government and Committee members to address these issues and ensure that regional communities are not left behind.

If you require further information or clarification on comments in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact our Interim Executive Officer [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Cr Kevin Beatty.

Cr Kevin Beatty

Chair

Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO)