

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

**Organisation:** MidCoast Council

**Date Received:** 25 July 2025

**MidCoast Council**

**Submission to**

**Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety  
(Staysafe)**



**Interventions to reduce road trauma in  
regional NSW caused by speeding,  
fatigue, drink and drug driving**

**July 2025**

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Version	Purpose of Document	Reviewed by	Date
1	Submission to Staysafe Committee	Richard Wheatley	25/07/2025
2	Finalised Document	Richard Wheatley	25/07/2025

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# Introduction

Parliament of New South Wales Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe) has requested submissions on “Interventions to reduce road trauma in regional NSW caused by speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving” with reference to:

- a) Research and data on regional NSW – specific factors, characteristics and demographics of road crashes
- b) Effectiveness of current strategies and programs to reduce speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving in regional NSW
- c) Proposed measures to reduce road trauma in regional NSW
- d) Implementation of relevant recommendations from the 2023 Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General, entitled ‘Regional Road Safety’, dated 30 November 2023, and
- e) Any Other related matters.



**PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES**  
Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe)

**Interventions to reduce road trauma in regional NSW caused by speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving**

**Terms of reference**

That the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety inquire into and report on interventions to reduce road trauma in regional NSW caused by speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving, with reference to:

- a) Research and data on regional NSW-specific factors, characteristics and demographics of road crashes
- b) Effectiveness of current strategies and programs to reduce speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving in regional NSW
- c) Proposed measures to reduce road trauma in regional NSW
- d) Implementation of relevant recommendations from the 2023 Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General, entitled ‘Regional Road Safety’, dated 30 November 2023, and
- e) Any other related matters.

This is MidCoast Council’s submission to this review with a strong focus on more cooperation between state government and councils. There is a need for further research on the areas that are restricting reductions in road trauma in regional areas.

The crash rates are not reducing with the corresponding fatalities and casualties is a major concern for regional community and all levels of government need to do better.



## a) “Research and data on regional NSW – specific factors, characteristics and demographics of road crashes”

### Crash Data - Timely

The data in TfNSW Crash Portal currently has about 12 months lag before being updated and accessible to council. While it is acknowledged the crash data needs to be vetted to ensure accuracy and multiple entries for the one incident are not inputted into the records. This delay can be frustrating to road managers and local communities wanting to respond to major incidents quickly or assess sections of the road network effectively. State and federal agencies require crash data to back requests for grant funding with any delay to the statistics delaying any action.

The more up to date the data available to traffic engineers and road safety officers the better the outcomes will be in road improvements and focused education programs to the travelling public. The local communities expect the road managers to respond quickly to significant incidents on the roads but this can be delayed when these incidents take over 12 months to be within the system

There may be an option for a two tier crash data method that has crashes listed immediately then moved to the main crash data when the information has been assessed. This would allow major crashes to be listed quickly with them reviewed against the main crash data for possible preventive measures. The funding of improvements by state and federal grants (i.e. Federal Black Spot Program) would still be reactive however it would be as close as possible to proactive with minimal interval to crash incidents.

### Crash Data – Relationships

The crash data needs to be broken down into crashes (fatal, serious injuries, etc) then proportion with volumes and kilometres travelled to determine crashes over usage. This may indicate that rural roads have higher crash rates when related to their lower volumes and kilometres travelled compared with higher population areas of Sydney and Newcastle. While there are some state wide statistics between rural and urban or city versus country it needs to be broken down to roads and their traffic activity.

The crash data should be ratioed with the volumes and type of vehicles plus the kilometres travelled. This would indicate roads or sections of roads that have a high incidence of crashes against low usage. The high population areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong would have higher crash rates due to the volume of traffic but country roads with lower volumes would have less number of crashes. This results in less funding for regional areas as there is much lower volume of traffic. However, if they were compared by kilometres travelled or number of trips then the rural crash rates may be higher, therefore the funding should be allocated on these roads.

There is no simple way to determine these ratios in TfNSW Crash Portal without extensive investigation in traffic movements and access to the state's data, which local councils do not have or could undertake. TfNSW should expand their data to include the hierarchy of roads with volumes and kilometres travelled against the crash history to ensure funding is available to lower usage roads with high crash rates to usage.

## Crash Data – Road Conditions

Road condition should be a consideration in data analysis as rural roads do not have the funds to maintain at a high level as in city areas. City councils with high levels of rate revenue against small road network are able to maintain their roads at a high level. Rural councils are the opposite resulting in roads that can not be maintained at the same level as their city counterparts. There can be strong support from state and federal governments to city councils for grant funding due to the high population and traffic volumes.

MidCoast Council Road Strategy (link to Strategy on MCC website: [MidCoast Road Strategy - MidCoast Council](#)) clearly explains the situation of being unable to maintain roads at a high level due to limited rate revenue and grant funding.

It is clear the road condition can be a major effect on road accidents and trauma to road users but is not taken into consideration when reviewing overall crashes and funding. The research and data analysis must review the inequality between roads in wealthy city councils and rural councils. It would be hoped this research would show the state and federal governments where funds should be allocated in regional areas where the roads are not at the standard that is expected.

## b) “Effectiveness of current strategies and programs to reduce speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving in regional NSW”

### Campaigns

NSW State Government is generally effective on broad topics of speeding, drink driving, fatigue and road rules for state wide audiences but they are lacking a strong rural focus.

TfNSW's Centre of Road Safety (CRS) website has 14 Marketing campaigns with none of them directly related to rural roads. They may focus on topics for all roads such as “Casual speeding”, “Plan B”, “Towards Zero” with none specifically on rural roads. No marketing campaigns on road conditions such as gravel roads, narrow winding roads, poorer condition and other rural hazards for drivers such as high speed, slow moving agriculture equipment, wildlife, or drive to the conditions.

Additionally, CRS website lists 8 “Topics and tips” that relate to all roads but none directly about rural driving with a couple touching on areas that relate to longer driving like fatigue. There should be “Topics & tips” for understanding and the requirements for rural driving and regional road conditions.

There is a desperate need for campaigns focusing on rural roads and their conditions with the responsibility for road users to modify their driving to the road condition, weather, wildlife, rural activities (stock on road), unique farm vehicles and road trains.



The broad generic campaigns (i.e. Plan B, Stop it... or Cop It) are needed for the whole state to cover city and rural areas but there must be education on the risks of driving on rural roads. The clearest message to be provided to motorists are they must “drive to the conditions” in regional areas, plus accept a level of responsibility on their driving. These rural campaigns are required for those living in regional areas as they can become complacent about the dangers and specific country road conditions. These education programs are beneficial and needed for city residents as they will be driving in rural areas for holidays, visiting relatives and friends, and work related trips.

## Local Government Road Safety Program

TfNSW's Local Government Road Safety Program (LGRSP) is an excellent program in providing a local Road Safety Officer to focus on behavioural aspects of driving and road safety in their council area. The program requires rural RSOs to use CRS State wide campaigns when submitting projects for road safety funding. It is excellent for the local RSO to enhance and expand on the state wide campaigns however there is a requirement for projects that relate to local issues.

There is no encouragement or funding to do local projects in the LGRSP that do not align with statewide schemes. This is a missed opportunity to highlight and promote local issues such as specific school concerns, late night venues and heavy vehicle movements around attractors like saleyards and abattoirs. RSOs are well placed to manage rural advertising campaigns linked to local opportunities (shows, community groups such as CWA, RFS/SES, high profile sporting teams/persons) with the focus on drive to conditions, heavy vehicles, wildlife and other local concerns.

Hunter Region RSOs work together to provide very effective campaigns on motorcycle safety and caravan safety that could be expanded with more support from state government to work with partnerships with local businesses. TfNSW must allow more independence to regional and rural councils to do their own projects with state government funding (i.e. LGRSP). These state funds with council funds or value-in-kind could produce significant local benefits and a willingness to include seeding funding for research on what may be effective in individual areas in council areas across the state. These projects would be required to meet KPIs of data driven and known identified areas of concern to ensure the funds were spent effectively.

## c) “Proposed measures to reduce road trauma in regional NSW”

### Road Maintenance

The MidCoast Council Road Strategy (link to Strategy on MCC website: [MidCoast Road Strategy - MidCoast Council](#)) clearly explains the situation of being unable to maintain roads to an acceptable level. This acceptable level provides a safe road with good pavement, however below this level motorists have a less than desirable roads. The Strategy clearly indicates that the roads will not reach the desirable level without external funding from state and federal governments.

Rural communities are disadvantaged from a considerable road network with insufficient funding from a small rate base. The residents of MidCoast Council and all rural councils are not equal with city residents with the sub-standard funding resulting in roads that do not meet the acceptable level.





The lower standard of roads due to limited maintenance increases the road trauma from road crashes. The trauma of road crashes would be considerably reduced if road maintenance was increased to bring roads to an acceptable level. This acceptable level of roads can only happen with grant funding to councils to improve the roads. This external funding would reap the rewards of reduced injuries and fatalities from less road incidents. These road accidents put enormous pressure on first responders and hospitals plus the personal toll to those involved in crashes.

## Research into rural issues and problem areas

There needs to be more research into road trauma in regional NSW with the development of programs to lesson the terrible outcomes from road crashes. This investigation needs to focus on the particular issues in rural areas and highlight the problem roads and areas.

The knowledge from this research will enable the preparation of projects that will concentrate on these problem areas with targeted campaigns. The campaigns can be managed and supported by the local RSO or a group of RSOs if the project is over a number of councils.

## Delineation

The delineation of roads can play a major role in reducing road trauma with the use of pavement markings, warning signs and raise pavement markers. The proper delineation of the road can provide reassurance to the driver of the speed and the alignment along a rural road.

Warning signs can inform drivers of curves and sections of the road that are not suitable to higher speeds and drivers can adjust the speed of their vehicle to the road conditions. The use of longitudinal line marking such as centre lines and edge lines will provide confidence to drivers of the geometry of the road especially at night and wet weather. The addition of raised pavement markers to the longitudinal lines further supports the delineation of the road at night and low light conditions.



The utilization of improved delineation will ensure drivers are aware of the changing alignment of the road then adjust their driving. They will assist drivers to travel the road at the best speed and awareness for the road conditions.

A state wide program to improve delineation on rural roads with the focus on high traffic volume, high speeds and poor alignment roads as the starting point then moving to lower rated roads. This will require a coordinated effort by state government and councils with grant funding to support the installation of delineation improvements plus ongoing funding to allow for maintenance, especially line marking..

## d) “Implementation of relevant recommendations from the 2023 Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General, entitled ‘Regional Road Safety’, dated 30 November 2023, and”

Recommendation from 2023 Auditor General’s Regional Road Safety

### 2. Recommendations

**By November 2024, Transport for NSW should:**

1. Develop a regional implementation plan to support the NSW Road Safety Action Plan 2022–2026, including an integrated and systematic accountability framework to measure, analyse and publicly report annually on:
  - a) road safety trends and insights on a sub-regional level
  - b) specific countermeasures that are tailored to the road safety needs of regional communities and to particular sub-regional ‘hotspots’
  - c) the impact of countermeasures against road trauma reduction targets specific to regional New South Wales
  - d) funding that is allocated to achieving road safety outcomes at a sub-regional level.
2. Develop and implement a plan to measure and mitigate the known and emerging risks causing underspends in the Community Road Safety Fund.
3. Expedite the review of the Local Government Road Safety Program and make recommendations to government aimed at increasing the uptake of the Program by councils in regional New South Wales.

There has been no significant improvement in reducing the road crashes and trauma following this audit. The most used indicator on road trauma is the road toll of fatalities per year and unfortunately the road toll of fatalities is greater this year than last year. The recommendations from this report need to be focused on actions to be implemented if there is to be a reduction road trauma.

The Local Government Road Safety Program has not been improved or a significant increase in funding to support local councils on their road safety programs. The suggested improvements in the previous sections if realized with adequate funding linked with these suggestions would make major improvements to road safety with the resultant reduction in road trauma.

## e) “Any other related matters”

### Wildlife Signs

CRS website states wildlife warning signs alert presence of wildlife (highlighted yellow below in extract) but wildlife could be anywhere along rural roads. This information on CRS website is providing drivers a false perception towards rural driving and the dangers of wildlife strikes. This is a badly focused information on state government safety website as wildlife could be anywhere along the road not just at locations with signs. Drivers should be on the lookout and aware of the danger of wildlife along all rural roads.

Griffith University 2013 study “Wildlife warning signs: Public assessment of components, placement and designs to optimise driver response: (link to study: [Wildlife Warning Signs: Public Assessment of Components, Placement and Designs to Optimise Driver Response](#)) reported the static diamond yellow Wildlife warning signs are ineffective. The study recommended the use of changing signs or message boards relating to specific issues (animals moving during breeding season) are more effective to attract the driver’s attention and change drivers’ behaviour.

This ABC NEWS article in their science section clearly explains the constraints of static warning signs for wildlife with suggested improvements: link: [Do 'wildlife ahead' signs actually prevent collisions between cars and animals? - ABC News](#).

It is noted TfNSW is doing significant work on protecting wild animals along state roads with fencing, new signs and deterrents for animals approaching these roads. These measures can’t be done along all NSW rural roads, therefore driver awareness and responsibility must be highlighted in a promotional campaign in driving to the conditions as stated in previous sections.

CRS “Towards Zero” Website: “Watch for animals” page extract:

**WILD ANIMALS**

Wild animals road sign

Wildlife, especially kangaroos and wallabies, may appear on or near the road - particularly around dusk or dawn, when visibility is reduced. They can be fast and unpredictable. When they stray onto the road, it's hard to know what they'll do next.

**1 in every 41 casualty crashes on country roads involves a vehicle hitting an animal.**

Livestock such as cattle and sheep are also sometimes found on or near the road and can present a danger when driving or riding. Slowing down and staying alert, especially around dusk or dawn, could save a collision and save your life.

**Safe driving tips**

- Reduce your speed - Slow down and look out for wildlife on or near the roadside.
- Stay alert - Animals can be more active near waterholes and creeks and harder to see at sunrise and sunset. They can be fast and unpredictable. Stay alert and expect the unexpected.
- Brake safely - Apply your brakes in a careful, controlled manner. Leave space and pass with care when it is safe to do so.
- Don't swerve - Take great care if you manoeuvre to avoid an animal. You may lose control of your vehicle if you swerve too harshly.
- Follow animal warning signs - Take note of warning signs alerting you to the presence of animals in the area. If you see these signs, slow down, stay alert and be prepared to stop if required.
- Report injured wildlife - call WIRES on 1300 094 737 or use the IFAW Wildlife rescue app to find a suitable wildlife rescue organisation for your location.



MCC is using Koala LED Signs to warn drivers of the presence of the animals in their high movement areas. Also, MCC will be trialing virtual fencing to be installed along The Bucketts Way, Tinonee. This fence is to scare animals away from the road when vehicles are travelling past at night. The virtual fence is activated by cars headlights that send out strobe lighting and high frequency sound into the bush to move animals away from the road.

There needs to be a marketing campaign to raise the awareness of drivers of the possibility of wildlife along country roads. Wildlife can be unpredictable in their movements and their behaviour around traffic, especially sudden change of travel. Many of the wildlife travel at night making it difficult to see them until they are on the road in the vehicles headlights, so drivers must have heightened alertness to this danger.



## Conclusion

The reduction in road trauma in regional NSW must be a coordinated effort between all levels of government concentrating on the specific characteristics of rural roads and driving on country roads. It should be evidence based on crash data along rural roads and the community expectations for these roads. The research should categorize the traffic usage to crash history so it is not just the busiest roads that receive the funding for improvements.

The marketing campaigns are lacking a regional emphasis on the special needs of traveling along these roads from being aware of wildlife, lower standard of roads, special farming vehicles and driving to the conditions. The current campaigns are generic to driving on all roads with no specific focus on rural roads. These marketing campaigns must be tailored to the local communities by the local council through their RSO, and allow new projects to the local area to meet specific problem areas.

There must be an increase in funding to support these marking campaigns, research and road improvements to reduce road trauma. The rural roads need improved maintenance to bring them up to an acceptable level to reduce crashes funded by state and federal governments. This is also the case for more delineation along regional roads to inform the drivers of the changing alignment of the road.

All levels of government and local communities need to be committed to working together to reduce the number of crashes on regional roads and reducing road trauma suffered by those in these crashes.