

Zero death and zero serious injury on roads must be our goal

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The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has called for immediate action on road safety, following another year where fatalities on Australian roads were unacceptably high.

Last week the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Michael McCormack MP, announced a reduction in the nation's road toll from 1,224 in 2017 to 1,146 in 2018, a total of 78 fewer fatalities.

RACS Trauma Chair, Dr John Crozier, said that while any reduction in road fatalities was welcome, Australia is still a long way from meeting its targets agreed to by all governments in 2011 under the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (NRSS).

"I am pleased that there are fewer fatalities on our roads, but sadly that will be cold comfort to the families of those 1,146 people whose lives were tragically lost. Now is not the time for complacency or to selectively interpret the figures in a positive light.

"Australia's road safety performance is in significant breach of our conservative NRSS 2011-2020 target – both with respect to death, but also, critically, with respect to serious injury," Dr Crozier said.

Dr John Crozier last year co-chaired an Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the NRSS. He said that while he had been heartened by the federal government's willingness to conduct the Inquiry, unless meaningful action was taken subsequently there would be little change.

"Unless we take serious action immediately, zero death and zero injury from road crashes, which should be our goal, will continue to elude us. Effective solutions are available, but material action on the recommendations of the report of the Inquiry must be implemented. To date the federal government has only committed to one of the twelve recommendations that were put forward.

"We have seen a decade of lost opportunities to halt the silent epidemic of serious injury on Australian roads, as governments selectively implement proven solutions. Continued failure to improve the situation will result in another 12,000 people killed and 360,000 injured at a cost of over \$300 billion over the next decade."

Ends.

About the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery. www.surgeons.org

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