

ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

PATRON: H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES



VICTORIAN REGIONAL OFFICE

22 June 2015

Hon Luke Donnellan, MP
Minister for Roads & Road Safety
Minister for Ports
1 Spring Street
Melbourne, Vic 3000

Dear Min Donnellan,

Victorian Road Safety Strategy

The Victorian Government and its agencies are to be congratulated on the *Towards Zero* initiative – envisaging a future where nobody dies on the road and reducing as far as practically possible, the number of serious injuries. Recognising the “hidden road toll” of people seriously injured is also to be congratulated.

Best practice safety improvements in all four areas of the transport system - Roads and roadsides, Vehicles, Travel speeds and Road Users - is key to achieving as close to zero fatalities as possible. Implementing all of the suggested possible solutions contained within the *Towards Zero* discussion paper will go a long way to achieving the goal.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has a long history of road safety advocacy. It regularly revises and updates its positions in accordance with safety measures which undergo ongoing research and development by a large ‘road safety’ industry. We attach our detailed position statements which endorse most of the suggestions.

While Victoria is currently on track to achieve a 30% reduction in the road toll between 2011 and 2020 as outlined in the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (NRSS), Australia is still one of the least successful countries at reducing its road toll this century, when comparing road fatalities per 100,000 population in OECD countries.¹

RACS congratulates the Victorian Government for its commitment to the NRSS, and for taking the extra step to plan for zero fatalities which goes beyond the aims of the Strategy. We urge you to implement all possible countermeasures that will see Victoria continue to lead the nation in reducing road fatalities.

There are some measures covered in the *Towards Zero* discussion paper, and some that are not included which may help you achieve this.



1. Introduction of 'black box' technology in all heavy vehicles and cars

Black box technology has been shown to deter unsafe driving practices, particularly for truck drivers, because people who know they're being monitored are more likely to drive safely. In addition to improving law enforcement, the technology can be useful in the analysis of crashes, facilitating a better understanding of crash and injury risk factors and mechanisms. New knowledge can be utilised by the insurance industry to improve overall standards.

2. Measures to improve heavy vehicle safety

Opportunities to segregate heavy vehicles from other traffic and road users should be explored and heavy vehicle operating speeds reduced where conflicts in the road system are foreseeable.

3. Greater use of point to point speed enforcement

Point-to-point enforcement promotes area-wide suppression of speeding because speed enforcement is sustained over a length of road rather than just a single spot. Research conducted in Europe has shown a 33 - 85% reduction in fatal and serious crashes after point-to-point enforcement was installed. Motorists have more positive attitudes and there is generally a higher level of public support for point-to-point speed enforcement than other speed enforcement approaches. It is also more cost-effective. Victoria was the first Australian jurisdiction to implement point-to-point speed enforcement.²

4. Use of alcohol ignition interlocks

Fitting alcohol ignition locks to commercial vehicles such as trucks, passenger coaches and buses, taxis, trams and trains will ensure that innocent passengers are not harmed by the drinking of the driver, in the event of an accident.

5. Greater efforts to reduce the role of alcohol in road-related injuries and deaths

RACS believes a more 'holistic' approach to road safety should be applied, particularly in regards to alcohol. In addition to the various countermeasures suggested in both the *Towards Zero* discussion paper and our Position Statements, the College supports measures to reduce the problem of alcohol abuse and/or misuse throughout the community more generally.

6. Ongoing efforts to educate young people about road safety

The inaugural report of the Australian Trauma Registry shows that 15-25 year olds are the most likely to present to a designated trauma centre, and that approximately half of all trauma patient admissions are road-transport related. Males were 3.8 times more likely to suffer major injuries than females. Unlike other programs which occur in the classroom, the

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Victorian P.A.R.T.Y. program (Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth) occurs in hospitals and is led by clinical staff. Studies from other P.A.R.T.Y. programs have shown that exposing young people to the possible traumatic consequences of risk-related behaviour in these settings has an impact on their perceptions and positively influences the choices they make in the future when driving.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this important discussion paper which will help save lives and reduce the number of serious injuries on Victorian roads.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Chuen'.

Mr Jason Chuen, FRACS
Chair, Victorian Regional Committee

Encl

RACS Position Statement – Road Trauma Prevention

RACS Position Statement – Trauma Prevention

¹ International Transport Forum. Road Safety Annual Report 2014 Summary. Paris, France. International Traffic Safety Data and Analysis Group. From:

<http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/pub/pdf/14IrtadReport.pdf>. Accessed 17 June 2015.

² Austroads. Point-to-point speed enforcement. Sydney, NSW. Austroads Ltd. 2012. From:

<https://www.onlinepublications.austroads.com.au/>. Accessed 17 June 2015.