

**Hon Michael McCormack MP**

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development,  
Leader of The Nationals

**Hon Anthony Albanese MP**

Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development,  
Shadow Minister for Tourism  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

14 March 2019

Dear Minister McCormack and Shadow Minister Albanese,

### **Urgent Action on Road Safety**

We would like to acknowledge the importance you both placed on road safety through your recent addresses to Parliament in response to the Recommendations of the Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy.

As you would be aware, those Recommendations were released almost six months ago with an expectation that they be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The overall responses from both the Federal Government and the Opposition have not addressed the urgency to repair our failing National Road Safety Strategy.

You would both be aware that a key finding of the Inquiry was " that the performance failure of the past decade can largely be associated with a failure to implement the Safe System approach to road safety..." and that "... when local government is considered, there is a need to recognise that there is extremely limited ability to pursue the agenda with no alternatives in sight".

The Recommendations also made it clear that new financial resources must be commensurate with the challenge of accelerating harm reduction and called for an additional \$3 billion annual investment by the Australian Government. This represents just 10% of the \$30 billion estimated annual cost of road trauma to the Australian community.

We remain concerned by the levels of bureaucracy and delays in the necessary review of governance; the lack of any new resources committed to road safety and the absence of any action to mandate proven low-cost safety technologies in all new vehicles.

We recognise that disrupting current stifling regulatory processes is not easy, but it is imperative. We also agree that the States and Territories must put parochialism aside and we value your bipartisan approach to encouraging this.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons representing those asked to treat the victims of road trauma, has specifically called for all 12 Recommendations from the Inquiry to not only be recognised but to be acted upon with urgency.

The Australian Local Government Association has identified the vital need to boost safety on local roads by increasing the annual funding for Roads to Recovery (R2R) to \$800m and a call for the Bridges Renewal Program to become a permanent feature of road funding budgets.

The Australian Automobile Association, which represents 8 million members through its constituent clubs (the NRMA, RACV, RACQ, RAA, RAC, RACT and the AANT), has identified that, in the 2018 Federal Budget, total land transport infrastructure spending over the four-year forward estimates is projected to decline by almost \$2 billion compared to the previous Budget.

The reduction of vital funding and the discussion of the impact of road trauma without a commitment to fund the additional resources necessary for such “mainstreaming” is completely at odds with the Recommendations of the Inquiry.

Roads Australia has also called for the implementation of the Recommendations of the Inquiry, including a campaign to raise awareness of road worker safety. Of the 3,414 workers who have died from 2003 to 2016 in workplace incidents, 39% of incidents were due to a vehicle collision. Your communications have made no mention of the potential of cross portfolio action needed to assist in reducing this trauma.

We would welcome a bipartisan commitment that the stipulation of safety standards through star ratings for all Commonwealth funded roads, recognised in the current Austroads Action Plan, can be a simple condition of expenditure. Pedestrian, cyclist, and motorcyclist safety must be accommodated in the “star” ratings and the consideration of safe mobility for all should be “mainstreamed”. As the Amy Gillett Foundation states; “It will be crucial to ensure consideration of cyclists and vulnerable road users is prioritised in this Review of Governance”.

We are also concerned at the claim “targeted changes in the Australian Design Rules have already resulted in a significant reduction in injuries and fatalities”. While this is relevant for some past changes, the statement is at odds with the Inquiry’s finding.

The Inquiry actually found: “The lag between new safety technologies arriving and a legal requirement that proven forms of these technologies be compulsory in new vehicles through the design rule process in Australia is unacceptable”.

ANCAP has identified a need for additional funds to ensure we can effectively measure the relative safety of the new car fleet, especially with the need to test the new assistance technologies for Australian conditions.

The Inquiry supported a call from the Australian Trucking Association that there was urgent need to “establish a national investigative regime to enhance current police, coronial and research centre road crash investigations along the lines of the ATSB”. Again, we have seen no support for this valuable proposal.

The Australasian College of Road Safety, as one of the many “enabling” organisations, has identified funding which would leverage research and collaborative communication programs. University based road safety research centres need to coordinate and build scale through support from the Australian Research Council, the National Health and Medical Research Council and various industry support programs. These need to be integrated with, and not separate from, the new technology development and assessment programs. The SARAH Group, the Australian Road Safety Foundation and many community programs must also be enabled to address the issues you correctly identified in the complexities of improving road safety awareness and driver skills, along with the need to resource the enforcement of the misuse of personal communication devices and substance abuse as these become more prevalent.

Every month we delay in accelerating these initiatives must be recognised as contributing to unnecessary injuries and deaths.

The Inquiry Recommendations do not need further review but they need additional resources and implementation. Ahead of the upcoming federal budget and general election, we implore you both to give urgent and bipartisan commitments.

- Provide detailed responses to all 12 Recommendations from the Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy.
- Establish a National Office of Road Safety with a quarantined budget and a stand-alone Minister with a clear cross-portfolio mandate.
- Commit to a minimum \$3 billion a year ‘road safety fund’ with guaranteed future allocations.
- Boost safety on local roads by increasing annual funding for the Roads to Recovery program to \$800 million and ensuring the ‘Bridges Renewal Program’ becomes a permanent program.
- Raise awareness of worker related road safety and also in road works.

We all share accountability for acting on road trauma, however, the federal government has a large role to play and the Inquiry's findings state that at present, this role is not being fulfilled.

Every day, around 100 Australians are hospitalised for road crash-related injuries. That's one person hospitalised every 15 minutes because of a road crash.

Every month, a further 100 Australians die on our roads.

Every year, road trauma costs the national economy more than \$30 billion.

You would both be aware that National Road Safety Week – an initiative of the SARAH Group – will this year champion the theme "Take the Lead - Drive So Others Survive!".

We implore you to act. Start now. Take the lead. Commit to action and funding in this coming Budget, in the Budget response and also in your election pledges.

We ask you to take the lead to drive policy reform and funding commitments to ensure others survive. This must not be put off until the next parliament.

We look forward to your specific and positive response.

**Michael Bradley**  
Chief Executive



**John Batten**  
President



**Lauchlan McIntosh**  
President



**Michael Parr**  
President



**Wendy Machin**  
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