

'Towards Zero'

A national road safety strategy



THE
GREENS



Road accidents kill more young people in Australia than anything else. In addition to the terrible grief that deaths and serious injuries cause for victims' families and friends, government figures show the financial burden of road crashes is at least \$18 billion per annum.

This is the final year of the Australian Transport Council's ten year National Road Safety Strategy that seeks to reduce the number of fatalities per 100,000 population by 40%, from 9.3 in 1999 to no more than 5.6 in 2010. Sadly however, the strategy is clearly failing.

As of November 2009 the national road death rate stood at 7.1 per 100,000, with New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania each showing a rise in fatalities. Last year, Tasmanian road deaths rose by a staggering 60 percent to a rate of more than 13 fatalities per 100,000, and young people below the age of 25 represent a third of all road deaths nationwide. The past ten years has seen more than 17,000 deaths, and some 220,000 serious injuries on our roads, which equates to nearly five deaths and more than 60 serious injuries per day.

There are many areas that can be tackled, including driver training, improving vehicle safety, improving road design and construction, and reducing drug and drink driving.

While it is true that governments are working on these problems, it's also true that a great deal more can be done.

Australia once led the world with the introduction of seatbelts, but since then has fallen behind.

Some states are aiming to change this – for example Western Australia has a Towards Zero Road Safety Strategy 2008 -2020 – but it should be the Commonwealth government which takes the lead, working collaboratively with all government tiers to assure safety on our roads.

Sweden, Netherlands and the UK have all adopted this vision. Australia's national government needs to adopt a vision of zero deaths based on making radical changes to the way we build and use our roads and vehicles.

'Towards Zero'

A national road safety strategy



Initiatives

1. *Enhancing the keys2drive program for young drivers.*

Learner drivers are the safest drivers on the road, however when they gain their P plates and begin solo driving, their risk of fatality and/or having a serious accident jumps dramatically (20-30 times).

This greatly increased risk remains for the first six months of solo driving.

The recently introduced *keys2drive* program, developed by the Australian Automobile Association (AAA) and its members, aims to dramatically reduce this risk by fostering the relationship between the learner driver and their parent/supervisor under the guidance of an accredited driving instructor. The program provides a free lesson which assists parents/supervisors to be more effective in their driver training role. The Australian Government has committed \$17 million over five years to implement *keys2drive* nationally; this will fund 200,000 *keys2drive* free lessons.

The Greens support this program, particularly because it provides professional tuition at the beginning of learner driver experience and accredits driver trainers to a high standard. However, while the program was started only 12 months ago, we are concerned that the level of participation is not as high as was hoped. To maximise the effectiveness of the program, this needs to be addressed

The Greens therefore will:

- a) Provide Commonwealth funding of \$10 million to increase awareness about the *keys2drive* program.
- b) Assess whether providing professional tuition at the beginning of the learner driver experience should become mandatory, once the effectiveness of the awareness campaign can be determined.
- c) Assure ongoing funding, beyond the five years of funding already committed to by the Commonwealth.

'Towards Zero'

A national road safety strategy



2. Conduct a comprehensive safety assessment of all roads – not just major highways but regional roads and ultimately local roads

The Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) is an excellent initiative of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA), the national association of Australia's State and Territory motoring clubs.

AusRAP conducts risk mapping based on a road's history of casualty crashes and traffic flow, as well as producing road safety star ratings based on design elements such as lane and shoulder width and the presence of safety barriers, which are known to have an impact on the likelihood of a crash and its severity.

This is essential work that should be expanded. Currently AusRAP maps only a small number of state highways and the federally funded AusLink network, where only 15 percent of road fatalities occur.

The Greens will:

- a) extend analysis from major highways to regional and ultimately local roads and will provide funding of \$20 million over four years to the AusRAP to ensure that this is achieved.
- b) assure the Government works in conjunction with road map publishers, internet mapping technologies, and state governments to ensure that road ratings are relayed through maps, GPS software and road signage.

3. All new roads or major upgrades should be designed to achieve at least a 4 star rating (5 stars if it is a major highway) and all regional roads should achieve a 4 star rating by 2020.

- a) The Greens will ensure Commonwealth funding of roads is conditional on the road achieving at least a 4 star rating (5 stars if it is a major highway). Improving a roads star rating from 3 to 4 stars or from 4 to 5 stars reduces the total costs of crashes by half.
- b) The Greens will ensure hardening the road shoulder for cyclists is included in any proposal for new or upgraded Commonwealth funded roads.

'Towards Zero'

A national road safety strategy



4. Commonwealth procurement policy should specify that new fleet vehicles must achieve an ANCAP rating of least 4 stars, preferably 5 stars. From 2012 the minimum standard would be 5 stars.

The Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) provides consumers with independent information, using a star rating system, on the level of safety provided by vehicles in the event of a serious accident.

Research shows that death and injury rates are halved in 5 star ANCAP rated cars compared to one star ANCAP rated cars. Most manufacturers are providing some models which meet the current ANCAP 5 star rating, a program now actively supported by all governments, motoring organisations and others.

- a) The Greens will ensure the Commonwealth Government buys only 4, or preferably 5 star rated vehicles and commits to only buying 5 star rated cars from 2012.
- b) The Greens will work with the Commonwealth to encourage state and territory governments to adopt the same policy. This would create a strong incentive for car manufactures to produce vehicles with high ANCAP ratings because around 7 per cent of all vehicles are sold to Government fleets. These safer vehicles are sold on into private markets within a few years.

5. *Travel Demand Management*

It is generally the role of the Commonwealth government to fund major highways and rail lines and the role of state and local governments to provide public transport services. However, large sections of Australia's rail network require substantial upgrades and mass transit services in most urban areas are so poor that driving, a considerably more expensive alternative, is usually the only or strongly preferred option.

According to the Australasian College of Road Safety the need to rebuild and extend Australia's surface mass transport systems could have a major impact on road safety outcomes. The amount of freight carried on the roads will probably double within about 20 years, unless efforts are made to get the freight onto rail. Further, that up to 45 road deaths per year could be reduced if just 15 percent of contestable road freight is transferred to rail.

'Towards Zero'

A national road safety strategy



- a) The Greens will work with the Commonwealth government to drive a fundamental shift away from private transport by redirecting road funding towards first-rate public and freight transport options. These will include fast, efficient rail links, busways and cycleways.
- b) The Greens will work with the Commonwealth to secure at least 25% of the \$14 billion earmarked for roads over the next three years for improved rail, public transport and cycleway infrastructure.
- c) The Greens have proposed a \$10 million concept study into High Speed Rail links between our major east coast population centres. The 12 month study would be led by the CRC for Rail Innovation.

6. *Hasten the installation of seatbelts on rural school buses*

The Greens believe that seatbelts in rural school buses are a vital safety feature. Before the last election the Howard government, supported by the Rudd opposition, promised to provide \$40 million for the introduction of seatsbelts on rural school buses. However, less than 10% of the funds have actually been spent.

- a) The Greens will drive this investment in safety and ensure the funds are spent and the promise of the Howard and Rudd governments is delivered.

All emerging barriers that slow the roll-out of this important initiative need to be overcome. It would be a tragedy if it took a serious accident to re-focus attention on this issue.

7. *Mandatory code of conduct for vehicle advertising*

For several years attempts have been made to implement a voluntary code of conduct for new vehicle advertising to reduce the unnecessary emphasis on speed and unsafe behaviours.

- a) The Greens will consult with the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries with a view to implementing a mandatory advertising code of conduct precluding unnecessary emphasis on driving at high speeds and unsafe driving.