

NRMA Motoring & Services

A ROADMAP FOR THE NEXT AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

About NRMA Motoring & Services

NRMA Motoring & Services (NRMA) comprises around 2.2 million Members across New South Wales (NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). For more than 90 years, NRMA has represented the interests of motorists in relation to road safety, road funding, and other relevant public policy issues.

Throughout the years, NRMA has advocated for safety improvements for road users focussing on the three key themes of safer roads, safer road users, and safer vehicles.

Since NRMA formed in 1920, there have been 34 Federal Elections. In each of these, NRMA has played an important role ensuring that the needs of its Members – motorists across NSW and the ACT – were heard.

In this, the 35th Federal Election in Australia, that role is as important as ever before.

WHY ROADS COUNT NRMA President Wendy Machin

Independent research commissioned by NRMA found that 74 per cent of people use a motor vehicle on a regular basis. Around 12 per cent use public transport and two per cent cycle regularly.

Australia's road network is letting the nation down.

Many of our highways are unsafe and upgrades that should have been completed decades ago are not even planned yet.

Sydney – Australia's largest city – has an incomplete road network with missing highways that must be built, so that people and goods can be kept moving.

Australia is falling further behind the rest of the world in generating transport energy from renewable sources and ending its dependence on imported oil.

Australia's roads and public transport infrastructure system is not designed for this nation's ageing population and their mobility has not been adequately planned for.

While technology to make vehicles safer has progressed in leaps and bounds, we are still not doing enough to ensure this technology is universally adopted.

These are just some of the challenges that candidates and major parties in the upcoming Federal Election must tackle.

The policies adopted by the next Government can make our roads safer and more efficient for all road users.

That is why NRMA has identified the key 2010 Federal Election policy areas laid out in this document.



NRMA Motoring & Services President
Wendy Machin



NRMA Federal Election 2010 Priorities

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to the following:

1. ROADS AND TRANSPORT

- a. an additional \$1 billion from the fuel excise for roads in NSW and ACT;
- b. continuing the current Government's commitment to providing transport infrastructure for cities, especially Sydney's missing motorways;
- c. significant funding for upgrades to regional highways, including the Pacific, Princes, Newell, Great Western and Mitchell Highways, the F3 Freeway and Bells Line of Road;

2. ALTERNATIVE FUELS

- a. addressing the fuel crisis by developing a national strategy to reduce Australia's demand for imported oil, mandating fuel consumption and emissions standards, investing in renewable energy, and increasing investment in our public transport systems;

3. AGEING POPULATION

- a. developing a strategy to ensure that the transport and mobility needs of an ageing population are met;

4. ROAD AND VEHICLE SAFETY

- a. a National Safe Road Infrastructure Program, including conducting an Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) star rating assessment of every major road in Australia;
- b. introducing a range of compulsory safety features to be included in all new vehicles sold in Australia;
- c. introducing a range of compulsory safety features to be included in all new heavy vehicles sold in Australia;
- d. adopting strict guidelines to ensure all government fleet passenger vehicles have a five-star Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) rating and all government fleet commercial vehicles have a minimum four-star ANCAP rating; and

5. RIGHT TO REPAIR

- a. introducing 'Right to Repair' legislation so that Australian motorists continue to have choice in motor vehicle servicing and repair.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to an additional \$1 billion from the fuel excise for roads in NSW and the ACT.

EXCISE SPENT ON ROADS

Last year the Australian Government collected over \$13 billion through excise on petrol and diesel, and \$3 billion on other petroleum products. They spent less than \$5 billion on roads.

More of the fuel excise needs to be invested back into roads to improve the safety and performance of Australia's major highways.

Investments must be directed to those projects where they will result in the greatest net benefit for Australia, regardless of whether or not they are Federal, State or Local roads.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to continuing the current Government’s commitment to providing transport infrastructure for cities, especially Sydney’s missing motorways.

SYDNEY’S MISSING MOTORWAYS

The Greater Sydney Region is facing increased congestion problems and the growth in passenger and freight movements will exceed the capacity of road and rail infrastructure in many areas.

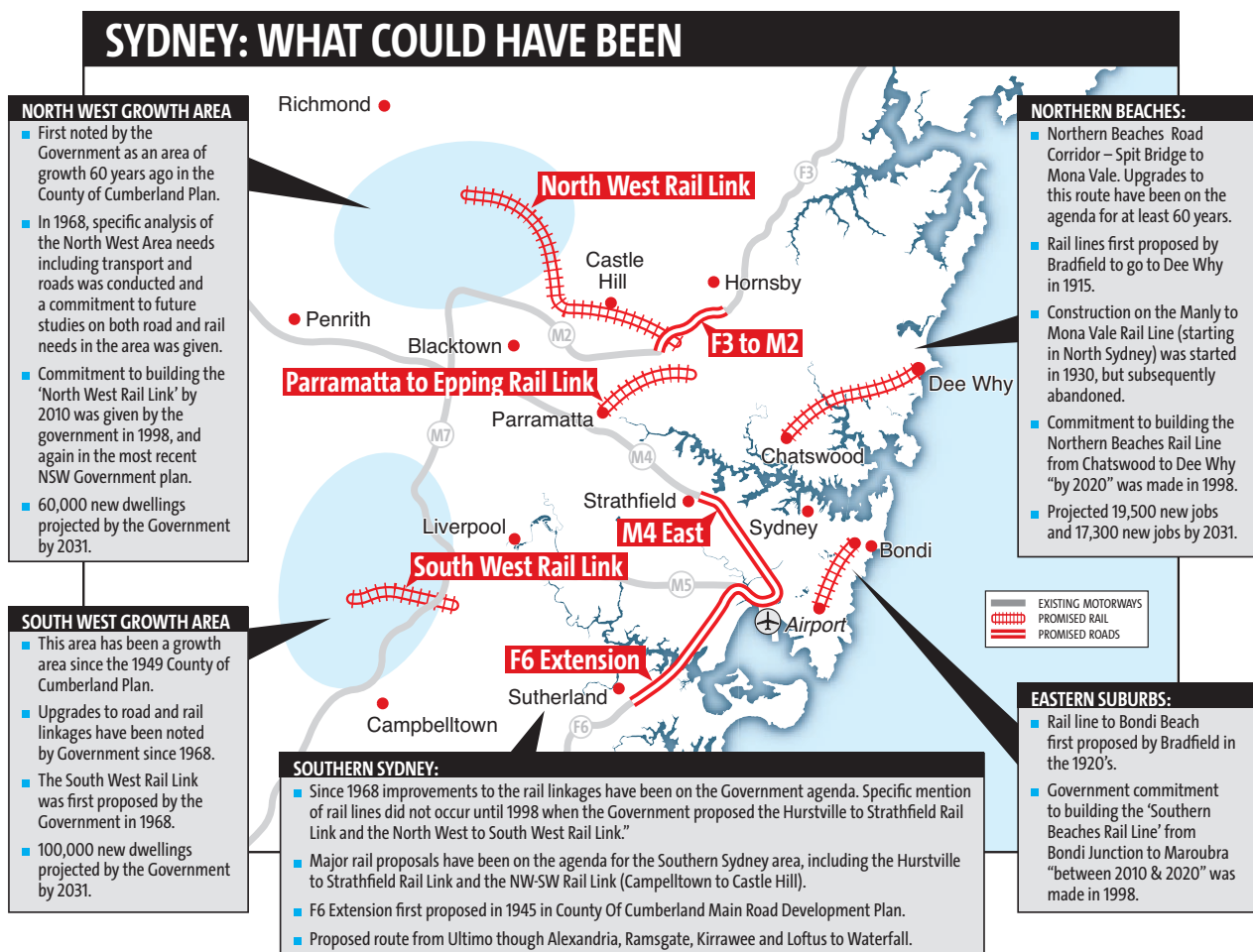
Much of Sydney’s road network is still incomplete. Major roads like the M4 Extension, F3 to Sydney Orbital Link, and F6 Extension, have been on the drawing boards of successive Governments for decades and roads such as the M5 and M5 East are in urgent need of widening and duplication.

These projects, of national significance to boost long-term productivity, require enormous work that goes beyond the capacity of one level of Government. The Australian Government must play a role in the planning and funding of these roads in conjunction with the NSW Government and the private sector.

These projects are also critical in enhancing Australia’s standing as a growing economic power base.

New roads will not solve Sydney’s congestion issues, but a well connected road network is the key to ensuring people and goods can move around, along with integration with other transport modes.

There remain large gaps in Sydney’s road network that need to be fixed to allow Sydney to keep moving and accommodate future growth.



How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to:

- funding the completion of the upgrade to the Pacific Highway by 2016;
- funding the upgrade of the Princes Highway to bring it up to a four star AusRAP standard;
- the necessary capital funds to improve safety by increasing the number of overtaking lanes and rest areas, realign the road and address blackspots on the Newell Highway;
- \$500m over the next three years for duplication of the Great Western Highway from the M4 at Penrith to Katoomba and Lithgow;
- funding for the Great Western Highway west of Lithgow and to the Mitchell Highway;
- funding the commencement of construction of the F3 Freeway to Raymond Terrace (Pacific Highway) upgrade;
- funding access to the F3 Freeway at Wyong Road at Tuggerah, Sparks Road at Warnervale and Alison Road at Wyong; and
- funding improvements on the existing Bells Line of Road and put an effective long term plan in place for construction of an alternative expressway road.

REGIONAL HIGHWAYS

Pacific Highway Corridor (Hexham to Ballina)

Significant economic and social benefits would result from accelerating the upgrading of the Pacific Highway.

NRMA has consistently highlighted the benefits of providing a minimum dual lane divided carriageway between Hexham near Newcastle and the Queensland border by 2016, as already committed to by both governments.

This road is the major interstate freight corridor between Sydney and Brisbane. Planning approval has been obtained for a number of sections on the NSW North Coast and it is essential that the remaining work be expatiated as quickly as possible to achieve the maximum economic benefits to both the NSW and Australian economies.

Princes Highway

The Princes Highway is both an important interstate and intrastate transport corridor. The Princes Highway requires substantial financial investment to meet current needs and ensure its long term viability.

Newell Highway

The Newell Highway is the longest highway in NSW at 1,060 kilometres but in spite of this, only 86 kilometres of overtaking lanes exist. This is a critical inland freight route between Brisbane and Melbourne.

A recent NRMA road audit found that trucks represent one in two vehicles on the highway between West Wyalong and Parkes and Narrabri and the Queensland border.

The clear lack of overtaking lanes on the highway makes it dangerous for all motorists. NRMA urges the Australian Government commit the necessary funds to increase the number of overtaking lanes and numbers of rest areas.

Duplication of the Great Western Highway from the M4 at Penrith to Katoomba and Lithgow

There is more work to be done to make the entire Highway dual carriageway and improve safety, travel times, and reliability. There is an urgent need to bolster funding to improve the safety of the road network over the Blue Mountains.

Upgrade of Great Western Highway (Lithgow – Bathurst) and Mitchell Highway (Bathurst – Dubbo)

NRMA's 'Central West and Western Plains' Better Roads Panel report clearly identified the need for upgrading the Great Western Highway between Lithgow and Bathurst, with additional overtaking lanes required. There is also a clear need for the Australian Government to address the impact of heavy vehicle through traffic in Bathurst itself. These upgrades must complement the work already being done on the highway between Penrith and Lithgow.

NRMA also remains concerned about the lack of progress for identified projects on the Mitchell Highway. An audit of the Great Western and Mitchell Highways between Lithgow and Dubbo, conducted for NRMA by Maunsell Australia, identified 11 black spots and black lengths on the Great Western Highway, and 18 black spots and 36 black lengths on the Mitchell Highway. The worst black spots were at Bathurst, Orange, Wellington, Molong, and Mt Victoria. Many can be treated with cost effective road safety improvements to reduce crash rates.

F3 Freeway to Raymond Terrace Upgrade

NRMA urges the Australian Government to commit funds to upgrade the Pacific Highway by providing the missing link between the F3 Freeway, south of John Renshaw Drive and the Raymond Terrace bypass. This upgrade will include an additional crossing of the Hunter River.

The 12.2 kilometre dual carriageway upgrade would improve safety and relieve congestion on this section of the Pacific Highway. NRMA understands that the planning of this project is nearing completion. Therefore, it is imperative that funds be available to commence construction of this important part of the National Network.

F3 Freeway Access Points to National Network

The NRMA urges the Australian and NSW Governments to commit funding for connections with the F3 Freeway requiring improved accessibility, particularly for Wyong Road at Tuggerah and Sparks Road at Warnervale. It is also essential that planning for future F3 access ramps to Alison Road at Wyong be expedited as quickly as possible.

Bells Line of Road

NRMA supports upgrading the existing Bells Line of Road by improving overtaking lanes, improving alignments, lane widths, and pavement conditions. In addition, an expressway road corridor should be set aside along the existing Bells Line of Road to allow for future construction. This is necessary, as the current Great Western Highway corridor linking the Sydney Basin through the Blue Mountains cannot be upgraded to provide B-Double access. The lack of B-Double access impacts on the ability to efficiently move freight and places the western region of NSW at a competitive disadvantage to other regions.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to addressing the fuel crisis by:

- developing a national strategy to reduce Australia's demand for imported oil by 75 per cent by 2030;
- mandating fuel consumption and emission standards to be compatible with the European Union and Japan;
- legislating to ensure all electric vehicles will be supplied by clean renewable energy;
- drastically increasing investment in and service quality of our public and active transport systems;
- focusing the alternative technologies and fuel strategy on environmental and health benefits of cleaner technologies/fuels alongside creating new job opportunities and practical transport access for the community; and
- designating a specific Ministerial portfolio and Minister to be responsible for developing and implementing the strategy.

ALTERNATIVE FUELS PLAN

Unless we act quickly to develop a renewable energy strategy, Australia's dependence on foreign oil will increase to more than 80 per cent within 10 years and we will have an oil trade deficit of \$30 billion in five years. We already import more than 55 per cent of our oil because Australia reached peak oil production around 2000 – that means we are no longer self sufficient in oil production. We will need to import more and more oil to meet our needs as transport demands increase. It also means motorists will be more exposed to oil price hikes.

The CSIRO's Future Fuels Forum suggested that the price of fuel could rise to \$8 a litre. While this is a worst-case scenario, there is no doubt that the price will rise as oil becomes scarcer.

Higher fuel prices will be particularly bad for people living in rural and regional communities because they have no choice but to rely on motor vehicles for transport. It will also be a major problem for those people who live on the outskirts of our cities and who do not have access to adequate public transport.

Relying on oil to power our cars will not only have a big impact on our hip pockets, it will also continue to have an impact on the environment. Transport accounts for about 14 per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions in Australia, has been growing at a rate of 1.5 per cent annually since 1990, and is expected to be 60 per cent above 1990 levels without a serious coordinated effort to reduce emissions.

Australia is falling behind the rest of the world in the uptake of alternative fuels and technologies. The Swedish Government declared a goal in 2006 of phasing out fossil fuels in the transport sector by 2020, France hopes to have 2 million electric cars on the road by 2020 and the United Kingdom is aiming for all cars sold from 2020 to be either electric or hybrid powered.

NRMA Members want the nation to address this crisis and they want the leadership to come from the Australian Government.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to developing a strategy to ensure that the transport and mobility needs of an ageing population are met, including:

- developing a transport and mobility plan by 2012 for people who are unable to drive;
- improving the level of transport for people who are unable to drive.
- safer and more appropriate vehicles, paying attention to door opening, location and size of speedometer, type of mirrors and seat belt adjusters;
- ensuring that Federally funded road, pedestrian, and public transport infrastructure is planned and built taking into account the needs of older people; including clearer and larger signage and line marking, turn right arrows, longer timing for pedestrians to cross at traffic lights, ramps and bridges across major roads and lifts at railway stations; and
- improved systems for assessing competency to drive by monitoring state licensing systems, advocating for changes to be research based and monitoring the changes to reflect trends such as reduction in injury/fatality rates and impacts on people's mobility.

MEETING THE MOBILITY NEEDS OF AN AGEING POPULATION

The population of NSW in 2030 will be significantly larger and significantly older than it is today. The state's population is projected to increase from almost 7 million people in 2006 to almost 8.3 million people in 2031. A significant proportion of the increase will be people aged 65 and older.

Over 65s currently make up 14 per cent of the population. Their numbers will increase to over one in five (22 per cent) in 2031, when there will be almost 2 million people 65 and over in NSW. There will also be a significant rise in the number of 'very old' people, with the number of people in NSW aged 100 years or older expected to increase from 1,000 now to 8,200 by 2031.

The economic effect of this phenomenon has been widely discussed, as has the impact on the health budget. However, the implications for transport are just as important and this is the big challenge facing all of us.

For most of their lives, many older Australians have depended on the car for most of their mobility needs. For the emerging group of older drivers – that is, those of us who are baby boomers – this will definitely be the case.

Driving is an integral part of peoples' lives – it is the key to their independence and freedom – they can go shopping, visit friends and relatives, and go to medical appointments. It enables them to maintain social contacts and participate in community activities. It is a key contributor to peoples' quality of life.

Mobility and independence are linked. The degree to which older people are reliant on their car will affect their resistance to reducing or stopping driving altogether. The consequences of not having the freedom to get around in their car are enormous for older people.

The challenge for the nation is to think about the challenges of ageing and transport now.

We have seen time and time again that it is much more expensive and difficult to retrofit solutions than to get things right from the beginning.

We need to start work now, endeavouring to understand where older people are likely to live and how we are going to keep them mobile.

Reducing Deaths on our Roads

ROAD SAFETY

In 1970, 3,788 Australians were killed and 33,000 severely injured on our roads. The toll had increased almost every year as our population rose to almost 12.5 million.

At that time, Australia's road toll was amongst the worst in the world. Few western countries topped the toll of 30.4 deaths per 100,000 population in 1970.

For many it was considered the price of progress. Then the road toll stopped rising, plateaued and then began to fall with the introduction of initiatives such as mandatory seatbelts, strict drink drive limits and random breath testing. We also started designing better roads and safer cars.

Had we continued at the 1970 rate a further 88,970 Australians would have died with 17 times that number seriously injured. Now, with a population of about 22 million, Australia's toll is about 1,500 road deaths a year, or slightly under seven per 100,000 population.

In 1971, Barry Cohen (a former Minister and chair of the House of Representatives Road Safety Committee 1972-75) wrote in his booklet 'The Australian Way of Death':

“We know that drivers make mistakes. We know that at some stage during their driving career of 40 or 50 years they will have a momentary lapse of concentration, drive too fast, be distracted by someone inside or outside the car, drink too much or make any one of a thousand mistakes that could lead to an injury or death producing incident. The point is should they die for it?”

The Chairman of the UK's Road Safety Foundation echoes this sentiment, Lord Dubs of Battersea points out that to err is human and on the roads, simple predictable everyday human errors routinely result in a death sentence.

In the last decade, there have been 101,689 fatal crashes across Australia. Every day five people die and over 60 people are seriously injured.

Thousands of stretches of road see the same human errors repeated year after year resulting in crashes that kill and injure.

Quite apart from the human suffering, the cost of road crashes wastes 1.7 per cent of our entire GDP.

Road safety is not just about having better roads, but also about better cars and safer drivers.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to:

- a National Safe Road Infrastructure Program;
- an expansion of the Federal Blackspot Program to \$350 million over 4 years;
- doubling of Roads to Recovery Funding for Local Councils to \$2.8 billion over four years;
- funding an AusRAP star rating assessment of every major road in Australia at a cost of \$5 million, an equivalent amount to the recent Government investment in ANCAP; and
- funding mass action safety treatments, such as wire rope safety barriers and replacement of rigid traffic signs with collapsible signs.

INVESTMENT IN A NATIONAL SAFE ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

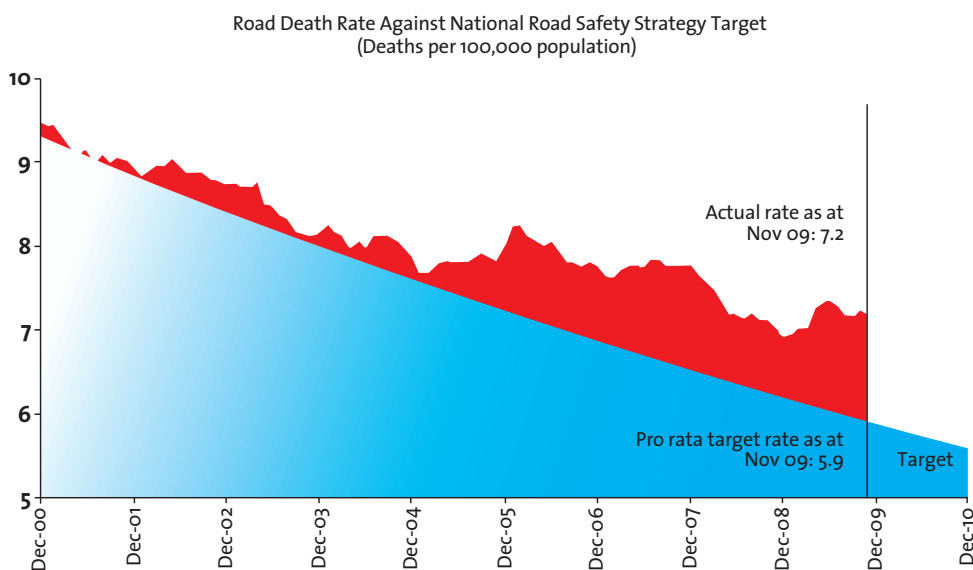
Research by the Monash University Accident Research Centre to underpin the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) shows that half the gains in crash reduction from the NRSS will come from safer roads.

The NRSS estimated the monetary cost of crashes as \$15 billion per annum (in 1996).

The crash reduction targets outlined in the NRSS 2001-2010 are not being met and specific investment is required to achieve the crash reduction targets outlined in the NRSS.

The NRSS aims to dramatically reduce death and injury on Australian roads, and specifically to reduce the number of road fatalities per 100,000 population by 40%, from 9.3 in 1999 to no more than 5.6 at the end of 2010. In comparison, as at November 2009 the actual national rate had plateaued at 7.2 compared with a target rate for November of 5.9, the New South Wales rate of 6.6 and the ACT rate of 3.9.

FIGURE 3 – ROAD DEATH RATE AGAINST NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY STRATEGY TARGET 2001-2010



Source: AAA analysis of Australian Transport Safety Bureau and Australian Bureau of Statistics data

Investment in a National Safe Road Infrastructure Program

One issue with the current focus on Black Spot program funding is it is reactive in that it targets clusters of crashes that have occurred at sites rather than searching out known high risks for treatment before people are killed and seriously injured.

One of the side effects of using site specific first year rate of return is that the benefits available from larger proactive programs that eliminate high risks across the network are not generated or captured. For example, if hundreds of kilometres of wire rope safety barrier were installed along extensive lengths of the National Network or if collapsible roadside poles were installed to replace rigid posts at 10,000 similar sites, the high returns come from the reduction in many deaths and serious injuries across the programme and over their economic life. If the first year rate of return were required then only those sites that had clusters by chance in the recent past would be treated.

Ongoing Investment in the Federal Black Spot Program

NRMA is a strong supporter of the Black Spot program. It has generated benefits far in excess of its \$45 million a year costs with an overall benefit cost ratio of 14:1. NRMA welcomed the Australian Government's commitment to extend this program and its announcement in the Nation Building package to double Black Spot funding in 2008-09 with \$60 million in new funding. It generates benefits for national, state, and local roads and in particular is a key source of funding by which local government may implement road safety improvements.

We would like to see an expansion of the Federal Blackspot Program to \$350 million over 4 years

Doubling of Roads to Recovery Funding for Local Councils

Local Councils are responsible for more than 657,000 kilometres of local roads. Local roads are critical for efficient and safe freight movement. For example, the last kilometre from a highway to a port or business is often a local government controlled road.

Roads to Recovery funding is often spent on roads to key local businesses and employment sources (such as a timber mill or factory) which in turn ensure the viability of regional communities with long term national benefits.

To date, local councils have either repaired or upgraded 27,000 sites around Australia using Roads to Recovery funding. Providing an appropriate standard of local roads for local connections can also reduce pressure on state and federal road networks. Individual councils, not federal or state bureaucracies, undertake decision making on projects. This ensures faster decision making on priorities with projects being completed more quickly and at less cost.

NRMA has highlighted the lack of adequate funding for regional roads and associated network infrastructure. This situation has been exacerbated over time, with many of the roads in a state of disrepair, especially in regional areas. Their poor condition has occurred as councils with a limited funding base have been forced to assume more responsibility for managing ageing regional road networks, which had previously been a state government responsibility. This has been further exacerbated in some areas through closure of regional branch rail lines, forcing more freight movements (such as grain) onto these roads, combined with the impact of the drought.

The Australian Government confirmed funding of \$1.75 billion nationally between 2009-10 and 2013-14 to continue Roads to Recovery for a further five years.

NRMA proposes that an additional \$1.75 billion between 2010-11 and 2013-14 be provided to local councils nationally to enable them to address the current inadequacies. Combined with the funding already committed by the Australian Government, this would equate to \$2.8 billion in funding to local councils at \$700 million each year for the next four years.

Star-Rating System for Australian Roads

Road design and improvement can play a key role in reducing the rate of crashes.

The 2001-2010 National Road Safety Strategy aimed to reduce the number of road fatalities per 100,000 population by 40 per cent by 2010 – or save 700 lives by the end of 2010. Almost 50 per cent of this target was to be achieved by improved roads. This target is not being met.

Through the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP), great work has been achieved by motoring clubs like NRMA and government to rate the safety of vehicles. We already have a star-rating system for cars, and we need one for roads.

Its sister program, the Australian Roads Assessment Program (AusRAP) has provided a similar five-star safety rating of major highways across the Australian road network.

This program provides road users with important information about the safety of the roads they drive on and allows for meaningful comparisons between roads.

It highlights improvements that can be made to roads to reduce the likelihood of crashes – and to make those that do happen survivable. Roads are rated from one-star (lowest) to five-stars (highest). Research shows that the crash costs are halved by moving from a two to a three-star road, and halved again by moving to a four-star road.

AusRAP provides further justification in support of ongoing funding by the Australian Government in the National Network and the treatment of black spots.

AusRAP puts risk assessment at the heart of decision making about road improvements, crash protection, and standards of road management. It provides a national and common basis of measurement that can be used for assessing priorities, benchmarking, and tracking progress in implementing a national road infrastructure program.

The Australian Government has provided financial support to AusRAP, however, no support was forthcoming in 2009-10, and there has been no commitment to future funding.

The Australian Government can ensure an AusRAP star rating assessment of every major road in Australia at a cost of \$5 million, an equivalent amount to the recent Government investment in ANCAP.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to introducing a range of compulsory safety features to be included in all new cars sold in Australia.

Compulsory from 2013 (as features become widely available)

- Tyre pressure monitoring – monitors tyre pressures and warns the driver if the pressure drops below a pre-set level.
- Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) –warns the driver if they exceed the speed limit.
- Alcohol interlocks – prevents the vehicle being started if the driver is affected by alcohol.
- Seat belt reminders – the effectiveness of many of the safety features in vehicles, such as airbags, is greatly reduced if seat belts are not worn.
- Minimum three-star ANCAP occupant protection and two-star pedestrian rating for any new car sold in Australia.
- Fatigue warning system.
- Anti-lock brakes and traction control on all new motorcycles and scooters sold in Australia.

Compulsory from 2016 (as features become widely available)

- Intelligent Speed Adaptation (ISAdapt) provides compulsory speed limiting so local speed limits cannot be exceeded (except for a brief period).
- Minimum four-star ANCAP occupant protection with Electronic Stability Control (ESC) and three-star pedestrian rating for all new cars sold in Australia.
- Fatigue detection system with progressive engine cut-out.
- Pedestrian detection and braking system.
- Lane departure warning system – provides an audible and/or tactile signal to the driver if they stray out of their lane without signalling.
- Electronic Stability Control (ESC) on all new light commercial vehicles sold in Australia.

MANDATORY VEHICLE SAFETY FEATURES

The design of motor vehicles plays a critical role in preventing serious injury or death in car crashes. Modern vehicles have greater safety features than their predecessors. While much has been achieved to improve vehicle safety over the past two decades, some simple and relatively low cost technologies or features can still be incorporated into vehicle design that could further improve road safety.

Experience over the past two decades has shown that when safety features are made standard across the industry, increased costs are minimal compared with the cost of the vehicle and other component costs such as insurance. The European Transport Safety Council has reported that the road toll would be reduced by 40 to 50 per cent if car owners purchased the safest cars in their respective segments.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to introducing a range of compulsory safety features to be included in all new heavy vehicles sold in Australia, including:

- Under-run prevention on the rear and side of all current and new truck models (over 12 tonnes). This will complement the recent requirement for front under-run prevention;
- Electronic Stability Control (ESC) for all new heavy vehicles;
- Tamper-proof on-board electronic monitoring;
- Disc brakes instead of drum brakes; and
- Anti-Lock braking systems (ABS)

The above safety features should apply to all articulated, B-doubles, B-triples and rigid heavy vehicles above 4.5 tonne from 2012 for new models and from 2014 for all new heavy vehicles.

HEAVY VEHICLE SAFETY

One in four vehicles in our cities will be carrying freight by 2020 and the number of trucks on Australian roads will double by 2020 and triple by 2050.

A national co-ordinated position is required since the issue crosses State boundaries. There are millions of truck journeys between Victoria, NSW and Queensland every year, as well as on other important routes such as between Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

The Australian Government must do more to make trucks as safe as possible. It is an appropriate contribution for the industry to make to the safety on our roads.

Front, side and rear under-run prevention complying with Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) regulations is required in the European Union. Progressive fleet managers in Australia are specifying these features to maximise safety for their drivers and other road users, maximise productivity and minimise vehicle downtime.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to adopting strict guidelines to ensure all government fleet passenger vehicles have a five-star Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) rating and all government fleet commercial vehicles have a minimum four-star ANCAP rating.

MINIMUM SAFETY STANDARDS FOR GOVERNMENT FLEETS

NRMA believes that fleet safety in organisations must be addressed. Road crashes are one of the most common causes of work-related deaths in Australia. Employers have a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of their employees and to do all they can to prevent or reduce the risk of occupational injury arising from vehicle use.

The Australian Government is one of the largest fleet operators in the country. They can play a significant role by ensuring that their fleet is one of the safest in the country.

They are in a unique position to set an example for all Australian fleet operators about the importance of vehicle safety when purchasing fleet vehicles as well as ensuring the safety of its employees.

When the time comes for the fleet vehicles to be turned over, they will enter the second hand market where everyday Australians will be able to purchase the safest second hand cars.

How to Get It Right

NRMA wants the Australian Government to commit to amending Part 5, Division 2 of the Trade Practices Act so that Australian motorists continue to have choice in motor vehicle servicing and repairs, giving independent service centres access to key information to properly repair vehicles, while still protecting the intellectual property and investment of manufacturers.

‘RIGHT TO REPAIR’ LEGISLATION

Over time, cars have become more and more complex “computers on wheels”. While technological innovations provide better emissions control, as well as more safety and comfort, they have made it increasingly challenging to service or repair a vehicle.

Under current laws, vehicle manufacturers retain important codes and diagnostic techniques, which make it impossible for other mechanics to offer the same level of vehicle servicing and repairs.

Without fair and full access to technical information, multi-brand diagnostic tools, and test equipment, the independent automotive repair industry is finding it more difficult to provide full service to motorists. This reduces competition and results in motorists paying more.

In some instances, unless a vehicle owner takes their vehicle to a manufacturer’s service centre at a dealership, something as simple as turning the service warning light off after a service cannot be done. Ultimately, this may lead to less competition and higher costs for motorists.

The European Union has ‘Right to Repair’ regulations, and there is a Bill before the US Congress for a national law. In New Jersey (USA) a ‘Right to Repair’ Bill that gives independent repairers access to the information and tools required to properly service or repair a vehicle has been passed by the lower house of their legislature and is currently before the State Senate.

Once a motorist has purchased a new vehicle, they should have the right to choose where they get their vehicle serviced and repaired.

These changes will give independent service centres access to key information to properly repair vehicles, while at the same time protecting the intellectual property and investment of manufacturers.

- i National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010. The Strategy aims to reduce the number of road fatalities per 100,000 population by 40 per cent by 2010, <http://www.atcouncil.gov.au/documents/atcnrssi.aspx>
- ii Road Safety Foundation, “Getting Ahead – Returning to Britain to Leadership in road casualty reduction” – publication number RSF 02/08 p19
- iii Australian Government: Nation Building – Rail, Road, Education & Research and Business – 12 December 2008, p8
- iv See www.nationbuildingprogram.gov.au – link to Roads to Recovery Program: Roads to Recovery Funding Conditions
- v Media Release: The Hon Anthony Albanese MP – Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government 28 August 2008, AA119/2008 http://www.minister.infrastructure.gov.au/aa/releases/2008/August/AA119_2008.htm