Introduction

Rural road safety is a major issue in Australia. In recent years, gains in road safety in rural areas have not matched those made in urban areas (Monograph 2, Trends in Fatal Crashes on Rural Roads). Furthermore, research has shown that country drivers are twice as likely to be involved in a fatal crash as city drivers (Monograph 5, Driving in Unfamiliar Surroundings Part 3: City Driving/Country Driving).

Country drivers are not necessarily less skilled than their city counterparts. Country drivers drive longer distances often on roads of inferior quality to those found in urban areas.

The separate requirements of rural road safety have been recognised by the road safety community. For the first time in Australia, a national road safety strategy has been directed specifically at rural areas.

At the Australian Transport Council meeting of 7 June 1996 held in Canberra, transport ministers from all States and Territories and the Federal Government agreed to support the plan. Responsibility for its implementation is shared between government, commercial and community organisations.

This monograph reproduces excerpts from Australia’s Rural Road Safety Action Plan, with a focus on the actions proposed under the plan. A full copy of the plan is available from the road safety authority in each State and Territory or from the Federal Office of Road Safety.
Australia’s Rural Road Safety Action Plan

For Australians living and working on the land or living in towns and travelling to and from work, a car is an essential requirement for business, recreation and entertainment. For Australians who must travel vast outback distances, a car is not a luxury item, but an item they simply cannot do without. As many Australians die in rural car crashes as in city car crashes and most rural crashes involve rural drivers. A higher proportion of rural crashes are related to alcohol, excessive speed, not wearing seat belts and fatigue.

Rural community attitudes to road safety are beginning to change but rural communities should see road safety as a major issue affecting their community and one they can do something about. Rural open road crashes cost the community about $3 billion a year.

From the time of the first National Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan, rural and remote road safety has been recognised as an important issue.

The first national Rural Road Safety Seminar was held in Wodonga in 1995. The Seminar recommended that a separate rural action plan be developed. As a result, this Rural Action Plan is designed to highlight rural road safety and initiatives pertinent to the causes of crashes in rural Australia.

Actions proposed

Activities

Planning Road Improvements

- Undertake safety audits of all National and State Highways and other rural roads. - formulate road improvement programs on the basis of their findings.
- Implement a special program of shoulder sealing with high-quality centre and edge-line treatment and other forms of delineation.
- Implement a program for removing or otherwise reducing the danger from potential roadside hazards, including culverts, poles, and trees in particularly dangerous positions.

Public Education Programs

- Localise the content of generic mass media education and make it available to relevant local communities.
- Give special attention to fatigue, alcohol use and failure to wear seat belts.
- Publicise locally the fact that those most likely to be involved in serious crashes in rural areas are rural residents.

Involvement of Local Communities

- Promote greater involvement of rural shires and councils and their local communities in defining local road safety issues and developing partnerships to address them.
- Assist local authorities in the detailed analysis of factors impacting on local road safety, and in the development of action plans to target problems.
- Establish information programs to disseminate information to councils and local communities about successful local initiatives and local programs, as well as those found not to have been effective.
- Provide training opportunities and guidance for local government on best practice in application of road safety countermeasures.
- Formulate special arrangements for Aboriginal communities, particularly in remote areas, ensuring representation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs to improve safety for them.

Lead Agency/Supporting Agencies

Planning Road Improvements

Commonwealth and State/Territory Road Safety Authorities

State/Territory Road Safety Authorities

State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/Local Government

Public Education Programs

Commonwealth and State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/ Police Services, Insurance Sector & Motoring Associations

State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/Local Government and Motoring Associations

Involvement of Local Communities

State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/Australian Local Government Association, IMEA and A.C.R.S.

State/Territory Road Safety Authorities

Commonwealth and State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/ A.C.R.S.

State/Territory Road Safety Authorities

Federal Office of Road Safety/ATSIC,

State/Territory Road Safety Authorities
### Speed Management

- Rationalise speed limits on rural roads to provide greater consistency for similar conditions, develop guidelines and tools for nationally consistent speed zoning.
- Use the same guidelines for speed zoning roads through rural villages and towns and on the approaches to provincial cities.
- Introduce appropriate ‘traffic calming’ measures to induce more moderate speeds through towns.

### Management of Fatigue

- Develop guidelines and programs for installation or upgrading of rest areas at appropriate locations with facilities that will make their use attractive to long-distance travellers.
- Encourage community organisations to provide ‘coffee stops’ on holiday traffic routes. Facilitate coordination of their operations into a publicised network of rest opportunities.
- Encourage Governments to initiate programs at state and regional level of profile line marking or other fatigue management treatments.

### Enforcement

- Improve public acceptance of enforcement strategies through public education and community support programs that explain the safety and social implications of infringing important road rules.
- Public education and community support programs to reinforce targeted enforcement in areas with high crash rates.
- Apply random surveillance to heighten perception of the risk of detection of infringing road rules.
- Use special police task forces to enhance local resources.
- Utilise new technology to improve the efficiency of scarce enforcement resources in targeting high risk behaviours, particularly driving at speeds excessive for the road, traffic, or weather conditions.

### Trauma Services

- Give priority to the establishment of regionally-linked trauma services and to their support with appropriate technology, including improved communication services.
- EMST (Early Management of Severe Trauma) training for rural doctors and paramedical personnel to be given high priority in development of regional trauma services.

### Remote Areas

- Address the unique problems of the most remote areas of Australia by developing programs together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This consultation will extend to the design, implementation, and evaluation of local road safety programs
  - support by a research program directed specifically to the needs of remote areas
  - appoint Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander road safety officers to appropriate areas and give training that will enable them to become leaders in the promotion of road safety for their communities.

### Lead Agency/Supporting Agencies

- **Speed Management**
  - State/Territory Road Safety Authorities
  - Local Government Authorities
  - State/Territories Road Safety Authorities
  - Relevant State/Territory Road Safety Authorities

- **Management of Fatigue**
  - Commonwealth and State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/Road Transport Industry, Motoring Associations and Local Councils, AustRoads
  - State/Territory Road Safety Authorities, Community Groups
  - State/Territory Road Safety Authorities, Local Government

- **Enforcement**
  - State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/Local Government and Community Groups
  - State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/Local Government and Community Groups
  - Police Services
  - Police Services

- **Trauma Services**
  - State/Territory Health Departments
  - State/Territory Health Department/RACS, AACRT

- **Remote Areas**
  - Relevant State Road Safety Authorities/ATSIC
  - Federal Office of Road Safety/ATSIC
  - State/Territory Road Safety Authorities/Local Councils
### Rural Seminar Participants

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<tr>
<td>ARRB Transport Research</td>
<td>Queensland Police Service</td>
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<td>Australian College of Road Safety</td>
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<td>Australian Motorcycle Council</td>
<td>Road Trauma Support Team</td>
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<td>Automobile Association of NT</td>
<td>Roadwatch WA</td>
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<td>Counter Disaster Unit, Dept of Human Services &amp; Health</td>
<td>Roadwise WA</td>
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<td>Council of Remote Nursing Association</td>
<td>Royal Adelaide Hospital</td>
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<td>Dr Michael Henderson - Consultant</td>
<td>Riverina Rural Health Training Centre</td>
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<td>Elliott &amp; Shanahan Research</td>
<td>Royal Australasian College of Surgeons</td>
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<td>Federal Office of Human Services &amp; Health</td>
<td>Royal Australasian College of Surgeons - Tasmania</td>
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<td>Helen Benham - Consultant RTA Albury</td>
<td>SA Police</td>
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<td>Institute of Ambulance Officers</td>
<td>SA Rural Trauma Project</td>
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<td>Institute of Municipal Engineering Australia - NSW</td>
<td>SA St Johns Ambulance</td>
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<td>Monash Medical School - Alfred Hospital</td>
<td>Terry Alford - Terry Alford Consulting</td>
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<td>Western Australian Municipal Association</td>
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