VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE INCREASE IN VICTORIA'S ROAD TOLL

SEPTEMBER 2021

VICTORIA State Government | Department of Transport

Authorised by the Victorian Government,
Melbourne
1 Spring Street Melbourne
Victoria 3000
Telephone (03) 9655 6666

Designed and published by the
Department of Transport

ISBN 978-0-7311-9198-7 (pdf/online/MS word)

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format such as large print or audio, please telephone (03) 9655 6666 or email community@transport.vic.gov.au

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Government thanks the members of the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee, chaired by Mr Enver Erdogan, and the people of Victoria who contributed to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll. The Committee's report and its recommendations demonstrate a shared commitment to reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

The Government has given careful consideration to the report's findings and 36 recommendations. Of these, we support 28 recommendations (10 in full, five in part and 13 in principle). We have placed a further five recommendations under review and we do not support three recommendations.

Victoria has a strong track record in leading lifesaving road safety policies, including mandating seatbelts (1970), legislating random breath testing (1976) and introducing speed cameras (1986). Since 2003, we have been adding safety infrastructure to our road network to reduce crashes on high-speed roads and at intersections, and where there are unprotected road users such as pedestrians and bicycle riders. Our new drivers are also safer thanks to the Graduated Licencing System and 120 hours of driving practice for learners. Yet there is more to be done.

In early 2019, we acknowledged deaths and serious injuries on our roads had reached an unacceptable level. The Victorian Government's Road Safety Partnership worked to drive down the rising road fatalities through collective communications, education and targeted enforcement where crashes were occurring. Unfortunately, by the end of the year, 266 lives were lost on Victorian roads.

As a result of the increasing trend of lives lost, the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll was established to investigate and evaluate the current road safety approaches employed by the Government, including drug and alcohol testing, speed management policies, and driver training programs. In addition to this inquiry, the Government launched Road Safety Victoria in August 2019 to provide leadership and coordination of the Road Safety Partnership in response to the current road trauma trends, and to create a new Road Safety Strategy to carry the state through the next decade.

In collaboration with the Road Safety Partnership, Road Safety Victoria commenced work on analysing long-term road trauma trends to understand where, how and why fatalities and serious injuries were occurring on Victorian roads. Despite year-on-year fluctuations, an unacceptably high number of fatalities and life-changing serious injuries continues to persist. More intervention is therefore needed for the next step change in trauma figures.

Since its launch, Road Safety Victoria has led the partnership to deliver Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, which aims to halve the rate of deaths on our roads, significantly reduce serious injuries by 2030, and set us on the path to meeting the ambitious target of eliminating road deaths on Victorian roads by 2050. The strategy builds on the Safe System principles and previous road safety strategies – as well as advances in vehicle and road technology – while acknowledging that the way we live, work and play has changed. It identifies strategic focus areas that are built around community cohorts and the levers available to us to affect positive change.

The majority of the recommendations made by the inquiry are necessary to see improvements from existing systems and interventions, a further drive for innovation and improvement, and an exploration of new and unchartered areas.

The government has taken steps to address these recommendations through the first Victorian Road Safety Action Plan 2021-2023, which identifies activities and initiatives that are quickly achievable, and others that establish the groundwork for future innovation in vehicle and road safety.

The action plan takes a holistic approach to improving road safety, encompassing initiatives relating to roads and transport, enforcement and justice, health and wellbeing, work, health and safety, and community. It focuses on creating a safer road environment, and on supporting key community cohorts to be safe and make safer choices on and around our roads. These include:

- **People who are at high risk of being injured:** unprotected and vulnerable road users, and those travelling in older vehicles.
- **People who use the roads for or at work:** where the vehicle is a workplace, those driving to facilitate work, as well as road workers.
- **People who engage in high-risk behaviour:** drink and drug driving, repeat offenders, people who speed, and those who are distracted or inattentive.

The action plan also supports work to reduce the underlying road safety risks on our roads.

Building on the long-term Road Safety Strategy and a three-year Road Safety Action Plan, additional findings from this inquiry will complement the forward program of activities that will assist the state in reducing the harm of road trauma to the Victorian people.

Amidst the backdrop of the bushfires affecting regional Victoria in early 2020 and the full impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the way Victorians live and move around, the Victorian Government is monitoring road trauma trends and remains optimistic that we can continue our long-term trend of reducing road deaths, and continue the efforts to reduce serious injuries.

Still, every life lost on our roads is one too many.

We recognise that road safety is complex and will continue to take a collective approach – across government agencies, our industry partners, and the Victorian community – to keep everybody safe on our roads.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the Victorian Government reviews the effectiveness of Towards Zero 2016–2020 Victoria's Road Safety Strategy & Action Plan and publish the results on the Department of Transport website.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Towards Zero 2016-2020 Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan was funded by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) with budget included to conduct an evaluation at the conclusion of the program. Some projects, initiatives and construction continue to be completed in 2021. When delivery is complete, an evaluation will be conducted with a summary of the findings to be published online by mid-2022.

As part of continuous improvement across the Road Safety Partnership, key learnings captured throughout the delivery of the strategy were utilised to inform the recently released Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the Victorian Government in its current road safety strategy set targets and defines how success at meeting the targets will be evaluated. This information should be published annually on the Department of Transport's website.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 has a target of halving road deaths and significantly reducing serious injuries by 2030. An evaluation framework has been developed to support the implementation of this strategy. Continual refinement of the framework is ongoing. Targets have been identified with correlating safety performance indicators (SPIs) and other key performance indicators to be utilised to provide road safety partners with information through the duration of the strategy.

Underpinning the strategy will be a series of action plans. Each plan will be three to four years in duration and provide an opportunity to learn, pivot and adapt to emerging information, trends, opportunities and technology.

Regular road safety data and statistics are published online by the road safety partners providing rolling information relating to fatalities and serious injuries on the network. The current evaluation framework and the data requirements for the strategy monitoring are still being finalised. An outcome evaluation will be assessed in line with the action plans to allow for each plan to evolve in line with current insights.

The nature of data capture and data flows to create fulsome datasets that contribute to the analysis of indicators will require longer timeframes for appropriate consideration. This results in longer term assessments of data in line with crash-based outcome evaluations.

The partnership is committed to updates of annual lives lost at the start of each year to provide insights to the previous year. Further, the partnership will publish progress against the safety performance indicators and provide periodic reporting in line with the action plan deliverables to provide deeper insights into emerging trends.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the Victorian Government publishes the findings of the Australian Naturalistic Driving Study on the Department of Transport website.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The TAC and VicRoads, together with fourteen partners from across Australia, were part of the Australian Naturalistic Driving Study, led by the University of New South Wales and Monash University. The study resulted in a significant volume of real-world data being collected from almost 400 volunteer drivers across Victoria and NSW. Findings from the study have been published through academic papers over the course of the study's duration. These include:

- Young K.L., Osborne R., Koppel S., Charlton J.L., Grzebieta R., Williamson A., Haworth N., Woolley J., Senserrick T., (2019). What contextual and demographic factors predict drivers' decision to engage in secondary tasks?, IET Intelligent Transport Systems.Young KL, Osborne R, Koppel S, Charlton JL, Grzebieta R, Williamson A, Howarth N, Wooley J, Senserrick T., (2019). What are Australian drivers doing behind the wheel? An overview of secondary task data from the Australian Naturalistic Driving Study, Journal of the Australasian College of Road Safety, Vol 30, Issue 1.
- Young K.L., Osborne R., Koppel S., Charlton J.L., Grzebieta R., Williamson A., Haworth N., Woolley J., Senserrick T., (2018), Original road safety research: Distraction and older drivers: An emerging problem?, Journal of the Australasian College of Road Safety, V.29, I.4
- Larue GS, Demmel S, Ghasemi DS, Rakotonirainy A, Grzebieta R, Williamson A, Charlton J, Haworth NL, Wooley J, Senserrick T, & Young K, (2018). Australian Naturalistic Driving Study (ANDS): Using 20,000 trips to get a glimpse at locations and speeds where data was collected, Proc. Australasian Road Safety Conference, 3 – 5 October 2018, Sydney, Australia.
- Williamson A, Lemon J, Grzebieta R, Mongiardini M, Eusebio JE, et al. (2017). Australian Naturalistic Driving Study (ANDS): Providing new information on the circumstances and effects of distraction while driving, Proc. 6th International Naturalistic Driving Research Symposium (NDRS2017), The Hague, Netherlands.
- Williamson A, Lemon J, Grzebieta R, Mongiardini M, Eusebio JE, et al. (2017). Australian Naturalistic Driving Study (ANDS): Providing new information on the circumstances and effects of distraction while driving, Proc. 6th International Naturalistic Driving Research Symposium (NDRS2017), The Hague, Netherlands.
- Grzebieta R, Williamson A, Charlton J, Eusebio J, Young K, Mattos GA, Koppel S, Lenne M, Wall J, Antin J, (2016). The Australian Naturalistic Driving Study (ANDS), Proc. 5th International Symposium on Naturalistic Driving Research, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA.
- Mattos GA, Grzebieta R, Williamson A, Olivier J, Eusebio J, Zheng WY, Wall J, Charlton J, Lenne M, Haley J et al. (2016). Pedestrian-Vehicle Interactions: Early Results From The Australian Naturalistic Driving Study (ANDS), Proc. 12th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion (SAFETY 2016), Tampere, Finland.
- Williamson A, Grzebieta R, Eusebio J, Zheng WY, Wall J, Charlton JL, Lenné M, Haley J, Barnes B, Rakotonirainy A, Woolley J, Senserrick T, Young K, Haworth H, Regan M, Cockfield S, Healy D, Cavallo A, Di Stefano M, Wong HL, Cameron I, Cornish M. The Australian Naturalistic Driving Study: from beginnings to launch. Australasian Road Safety Conference, Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, Gold Coast QLD, October 14-16, 2015.
- Regan, M.A, Williamson, A., Grzebieta, R., Charlton, J., Lenne, M., Watson, B., Haworth, N., Rakotonirainy, A.,Woolley, J., Anderson, R., Senserrick, T., & Young, K. (2013). The Australian 400-Car Naturalistic 1 Driving Study: Innovation in Road Safety Research and Policy, Proceedings of the Road Safety Research, Policing and Enforcement conference, Brisbane, Australia, 29-30 August.
- Regan M.A., Williamson A., Grzebieta R, Tao L., (2012). Naturalistic Driving Studies: Literature Review and Planning for the Australian Naturalistic Driving Study, Proc. Australasian College of Road Safety Conference – A Safe System: Expanding the reach!", Sydney.

The Victorian Government is committed to publishing research conducted to improve road safety outcomes. A substantial amount of published road safety research can be accessed through the Victorian Government's State Library website: **slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover**.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

That the Victorian Government embeds Safe System principles in all road transport decision-making.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Victorian Government has committed to the Safe System approach to road safety since 2004 and renewed its commitment in each road safety strategy since. While steps have been taken to support the embedding of the Safe System into transport decision-making, it is acknowledged that gaps remain and more work is required. The Government supports the recommendations of embedment of safe system principles into all road transport decision-making.

New projects built on our road network currently have safety performance indicators they are required to meet. These performance indicators are aligned with the Safe System approach. However, many projects have multiple objectives and constraints that can result in projects being built that may require retro fitment in the future to align them to the state's stated goal of zero fatal and serious injuries to be Safe System-aligned.

Following this recommendation, the Victorian Government will adopt a new policy approach that all new infrastructure projects will be built with Safe System alignment as far as is reasonably practicable which will reduce the amount of any future costly retro fitment.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That the Victorian Government reviews the skill base of managers in the Department of Transport. Required skills include, but are not limited to engineering and infrastructure road safety policy vehicle safety technology.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Road Safety Partnership agrees in principle that skills such as engineering and infrastructure road safety policy and vehicle safety technology expertise are essential to support a full Safe System approach to road safety. In line with this, the Department of Transport currently has engineers and supporting staff for design and delivery of safe infrastructure, including an Executive Director level chief of engineering for roads.

Within the policy and strategy area of Road Safety Victoria (RSV), which leads the development and oversees delivery of the strategy and action plan, there are five managers, two of which are engineers with expertise in their respective fields. Within those teams are engineers with civil and mechanical engineering qualifications. RSV considers that the development of road infrastructure, speed and vehicle technology policy is critical in the delivery of the road safety strategy.

While senior leadership roles across RSV and DoT are not always technical specialists, the structure provides for management and officer level technical expertise. The principle of these skills being included across DoT is agreed, however certain skillsets to manage project and program delivery, policy development, communications, leadership and change management are also valued as part of RSV's ability to deliver on all aspects of the Safe System approach.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

That the Victorian Government publishes an annual report on road standards that states the star rating for highways, arterial roads and other roads of significance, such as urban roads with high pedestrian and cyclist activity, in Victoria.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

Road safety star ratings are a useful way to communicate the relative safety of different parts of the road network. They are the road network equivalent of the star ratings for new and used cars. Road safety star ratings are based on a range of factors, but are most strongly influenced by the standard of the road and roadside infrastructure, including the road alignment (e.g. straight or winding), number and width of traffic lanes, presence of and width of sealed shoulders, whether the road is divided or undivided, and intersection format and control. The speed limit also has a significant influence.

While the condition of the road surface is a factor that is included in determining the star rating of a road, its influence is relatively minor. Consequently, publishing of star ratings will not give a meaningful indication to the public of "when stretches of road have been maintained". Accordingly, a separate annual report will be produced for road condition.

At the current time, there is insufficient data available to establish star ratings for urban roads, including those with high pedestrian and cyclist activity. The data requirements for urban roads are far greater than for rural roads. The Department of Transport will investigate alternative ways of providing information to the public regarding the road safety risk to pedestrians and cyclists on roads that have high activity and/or are priority routes for pedestrians or cyclists.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendation in principle that the Department of Transport will produce an annual report to show the road safety star ratings for rural arterial roads, including rural freeways and highways. The Department will also report annually on road condition and will investigate alternative ways of providing information for urban roads.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

That the Victorian Government undertakes and publishes research to determine the cost and timeframe of ensuring all highways, arterial roads and other roads of significance in Victoria are a minimum three-star rating.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Victorian Government supports the intent of undertaking and publishing research to determine the cost and timeframe of ensuring all highways, arterial roads and other roads of significance in Victoria are safe for all road users.

The committee has recommended an assessment of a three-star rating. While this is an indication of basic safety of roads, only upgrading our network to three stars would not align to the Victorian Government's long-term strategy of zero deaths and serious injuries of roads users by 2050.

The Department of Transport is in the process of creating a network safety plan for the arterial road network which will determine the required road standard and star rating from a safety perspective to meet our road safety strategy target. This network safety plan will include an analysis of the costs and timeframes to achieve this network upgrade, taking into account advancing vehicle technology. The analysis will include reviewing different treatment options to meet this objective, such as options for improved infrastructure, reduced speeds, and a combination of the two.

This work is funded in the current road safety action plan and is to be completed within the next two years.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

That the Victorian Government reports on the predicted road standard rating for all road projects, including the expected lifespan and projections. Projections should take into account population growth and ensure roads meet the needs of all road users.

This recommendation is supported in part.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendation to report on the predicted road standard rating for major projects (e.g. metropolitan arterial road duplication projects), including the expected lifespan and projections. This will provide additional transparency with the community and greater confidence in the benefits of projects the Government is investing in.

Assessment of the benefits and impacts of all proposed road improvement projects is required as part of the budget and investment management process. A full business case is required for all major projects and must be submitted to the Government for approval. The assessment of smaller projects, while requiring Government budget approval, is generally managed within the Department of Transport.

Project outcomes are assessed for conformance with Government legislation and strategies (e.g. Transport Integration Act, Plan Melbourne 2017–2050 and the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030). Future performance targets at the network and project levels have been established by the Department of Transport under the Movement and Place framework.

Reporting for smaller projects (e.g. the installation of traffic signals or construction of a turning lane) will be considered on a project-by-project basis, depending upon their network impact. Smaller projects are often implemented to address a localised issue and have a limited network affect.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

That the Victorian Government reviews its current road maintenance priorities to ensure standards such as line marking, safe shoulders and resurfacing are adequately maintained on high-speed minor roads.

This recommendation is supported in part.

The Victorian Government acknowledges that poor road conditions can be a safety risk to road users. However, road condition has been found to be a much smaller risk than other contributing issues on the road network, such as traffic volumes, speed, intersections and roadside objects, such as trees and poles.

The Victorian Auditors General Office (VAGO) review into "maintaining state-controlled roadways" in 2017 also considered how lack of maintenance might be a safety issue to road users. This review recommended that the state "develop a road maintenance strategy with clear objectives, outcomes and measures that define both technical and road-user levels of service for each road maintenance category". Following this recommendation, the Department of Transport updated its pavement management strategic plan, which addressed the requirements noted in the VAGO recommendation

Additionally, following the VAGO audit, the Department has updated its Road Management Plan published at the beginning of 2021. This update includes the policy that "The safety of road users, the integrity of road infrastructure and the amenity of roadsides are important considerations in inspection, maintenance and repair standards."

Given the recent maintenance updates based of the VAGO recommendations, the Government believes there is no need for another specific review into the state's road maintenance priorities. However, there is a need to review the relationship between our network standards from a network safety plan level and how maintenance will play a part.

The Government plans to determine the required standard of the road network through a network safety plan and then determine what strategic maintenance is required to keep the roads to the standard in the network safety plan. This work will include strategic research and planning as to how maintenance plays a part in our strategic safety investment planning. Once the Network Safety Plan is complete, maintenance plans will be able to be reviewed.

The Government is investing $653.5 million in 2020-21 and 2021-22 to rebuild and resurface roads across the state, including $425 million for regional Victoria and $229 million for metropolitan roads.

During 2020/21, the maintenance blitz improved more than 2,430 kilometres of road delivering more reliable journeys for local drivers, freight operators and tourists.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

That the Victorian Government improves its standard of community engagement and consultation relating to the planning, positioning and implementation of flexible wire rope barriers in Victoria by undertaking site visits, publishing design guidelines and plans for specified stretches of road, and addressing logistical concerns with land owners and emergency services.

This recommendation is supported in part.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendation to improve the standard of community engagement and consultation relating to the planning, positioning and implementation of flexible wire rope barriers in Victoria.

Prior to the recommendations set out in the VAGO report on the installation of flexible wire rope barriers and from this parliamentary inquiry, the Department of Transport had commenced significant communications and engagement activities prior to installing flexible safety barriers on identified routes.

Guidelines for the installation of flexible safety barriers are available via the VicRoads and Austroads websites.

While individual designs for each road are not available online, each project has a dedicated webpage that provides key information on the safety treatments, project site maps and information about construction delays which are easily digestible and informative for the general public. Project designs are made public during site visits and community events where engineers have the opportunity to present this information, explain how access points are maintained and work through questions with the community.

The Victorian Government supports working with local communities and emergency services to achieve the best design and community acceptance of barrier installation. Currently, the engagement team already undertakes site visits with project managers prior to designs being finalised to identify key stakeholders and impacted residents who need to be consulted about upcoming works and construction impacts. Each project also has a dedicated public engagement plan that outlines the road history, including problem identification, project scope, key stakeholders, areas for negotiation, communications and engagement activities and a risk matrix along with mitigations strategies.

Prior to construction, the Department of Transport works to meet with impacted stakeholders and residents to discuss detailed designs for barrier installation, which provides an opportunity to run through project designs for the specified stretches of road and address logistical concerns with landowners and emergency services. On many of the barrier projects that the Department has delivered, this feedback from key stakeholder constitution has resulted in changes to the design prior to construction.

In these meetings, project managers and engineers are often in attendance to provide technical expertise and address community concerns. This also ensures communities have opportunities to provide feedback and influence the outcomes of the project. These activities also make sure that all legal access points are maintained, and breaks occur in barriers every 500m to 1km to support emergency services when responding to an incident on a road treated with barriers.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

That the Victorian Government, in line with the Victorian Auditor-General's report, Safety on Victoria's Roads – Regional Road Barriers, ensures the Department of Transport improves record keeping in relation to future installation of flexible wire rope barriers, including accurately recording the location of barriers installation date state of repair cost of routine maintenance and monitoring.

This recommendation is supported in part.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendation in part. The Department of Transport has started undertaking improvement works to refine processes and invest in a system to accurately record safety barrier assets. This includes the recording of location, installation dates and state of repair. The new system was launched in June 2021 and is in the stages of being implemented to ensure it can report on the status of all barriers.

The Department has maintenance contractors undertake monthly inspections for the entire road network to identify hazards and defects, including the safety barriers. Maintenance contractors record and report on the maintenance performed and monitor the expenditure. The Department also plans to introduce improvements in data and maintenance approaches conducted by staff and contractors. This work is to be implemented in 2022 and will verify and expand on the current safety barrier inventory, improve record keeping practices and introduce new routine maintenance processes to better understand and differentiate a barriers state of repair. This includes introducing objective timeliness standards and an estimation tool to provide approximate costs of routine maintenance of safety barriers.

However, the Department can report on barriers delivered through a range of specific road safety infrastructure programs which jointly account for around $2.6 billion worth of investment:

RECOMMENDATION 12:

That the Victorian Government considers wider deployment of variable speed limits across appropriate sections of the road network.

This recommendation is supported in full.

Where there is significant variation in risk due to different usage or conditions, variable speed limits can be justified as an active form of speed management. Key road scenarios where variable speed limits have been successfully deployed include school speed zones, strip shopping centre speed zones and lane use management systems on freeways. In these cases, driver acceptance and compliance are high and have been demonstrated to reduce casualty crashes by up to 20 per cent. In the case of freeways, lower speed limits during peak times can increase capacity and reduce congestion as well as reducing crashes by around 30 per cent.

Most recently, the Department of Transport has been trialling 'Side Road Activated Speed' limits (SRAS) across around 20 sites. These can temporarily reduce the speed on the main road by 30 km/h when the presence of a vehicle entering from the side road is detected.

In response to the inquiry's recommendation, the Victorian Government will expand the use of variable speed limits in proven scenarios and will investigate other road scenarios where new deployments may be warranted, although further analysis is required of a suitable funding model and alignment with existing initiatives for infrastructure upgrades with variable speed limits.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

That the Victorian Government undertakes research into whether vehicle-specific speed limits would be an effective speed management option in Victoria.

This recommendation is not supported.

Jurisdictions with more wide-spread vehicle-specific speed limits generally apply on motorways and freeways which typically have three lanes in each direction. This allows greater scope for vehicles travelling at different speeds to separate into different streams. This road cross section is comparatively rare in Victoria as most freeways have two lanes in each direction, including all 110km/h freeways.

In 2016 and 2017, the Victorian Government conducted a trial of 90 km/h for trucks on Monash Freeway, a road where there are three or more lanes in each direction. However, this trial discontinued early as evidence showed it increased aggressive and dangerous driving.

Evidence of increased aggressive driving and inappropriate overtaking manoeuvres is replicated in other jurisdictions where differential speed limits have been trialled on roads with a single lane in each direction. These types of roads account for over 95 per cent of Victoria's high-speed road network. They are also associated with lower overall average speeds, suggesting an increase in travel time, which is counter to arguments presented to the inquiry.

With respect to motorcycle-specific speed limits, speed and speeding are high causal factors in motorcycle crashes and the Department does not support increasing motorcycle speeds further.

Vehicle-specific speed limits are applied in Victoria which limit large freight vehicles to 100 km/h, under Road Rule 21(2). This means that these types of vehicles are limited to 100km/h even on 110km/h roads in Victoria, as is the case nationally. Given these roads have a second lane, there is opportunity for other vehicle types to overtake safely and there are no plans to change this rule.

Extension of vehicle-specific speed limits in Victoria to other speeds or vehicles is not supported at this point given the paucity of evidence around its effectiveness as a road safety tool. The Victorian Government will focus effort on established speed management practices as identified by the committee in recommendations 12 and 14, as well as others with sound evidence bases.

RECOMMENDATION 14:

That the Victorian Government reviews speed limits on all rural and regional roads as a matter of priority to identify unsafe roads with low traffic volumes where speed limits should be reduced and reduce them accordingly, and identify unsafe roads with high traffic volumes where spending should be prioritised and develop a spending and construction program based the review outcomes.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The link between speed and both the likelihood and severity of crashes is well established and around 30 per cent of fatal crashes and 15 per cent of serious injury crashes in Victoria occur on the 180,000km of lower standard and lower volume rural roads that are currently limited at 100 km/h. The vast majority of these roads are local government roads where infrastructure solutions (such as barriers) are not feasible over the next 30 years.

These roads are different to the rural and regional freeways and highways that carry both the largest volumes of traffic and sustain the long-distance country journeys. The Victorian Government remains committed to maintaining higher speeds to support productivity and regional economic growth on these routes. However, these roads require significant ongoing investment in safety barrier systems and intersection upgrades to achieve the safety standards which can support vehicle travel at 100 km/h and 110 km/h without high rates of road trauma.

Where investment in barrier systems and other infrastructure is not a feasible solution, due to lower traffic volumes and other geometric constraints, the Victorian Government will look at 80km/h speed limits to manage roads with high crash risks.

The Department of Transport is developing a Network Safety Plan which will identify the roads of strategic and economic significance which require safety infrastructure investment and those roads which can be managed safely with speed limits. Any changes recommended from the plan will be implemented on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the community.

The Department of Transport has been working with several local government authorities (such as Mornington Peninsula Shire) and has reduced speed limits on a range of key arterial routes with winding, difficult driving conditions. These changes have been implemented and are well accepted by the community. The Department will continue to work with local government authorities on speed management plans where these address crash risks and have been consulted with the community.

It is understood the community is concerned that reduced speed limits in rural and regional areas will result in increased travel times. The Victorian Government will support any changes to policy with community education that highlights the systemic risk of speed and links to road trauma on low standard roads, while also addressing travel time concerns.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

That the Victorian Government develops a strategy to improve public confidence in the speed camera system, including increasing public awareness of the Cameras Save Lives website and where money raised by fines is invested.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendation to develop a strategy to improve public confidence in Victoria's road safety camera system.

Road safety cameras play a critical role in deterring drivers who speed and are an effective measure in reducing speed-related road trauma in Victoria. Fixed intersection cameras provide specific deterrence when installed at 'high risk' intersections with a history of crashes causing injury or death. On average, these cameras reduce fatalities and serious injuries at the intersection by around 26 per cent. Mobile road safety cameras provide general deterrence against speeding by developing a public perception of speed enforcement 'anywhere at any time', which is particularly vital in rural, regional and outer Melbourne metropolitan areas.

Victoria's road safety camera system has evolved over the years to meet high standards of accuracy and reliability. The Department of Justice and Community Safety oversees the operation of robust camera technology and supporting assurance processes, which are independently verified by annual and ad hoc reviews undertaken by the Road Safety Camera Commissioner.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety provides public awareness about Victoria's road safety camera system primarily through the Cameras Save Lives (CSL) website (**camerassavelives.vic.gov.au**). The CSL website provides transparent information for the public on how road safety cameras work, where they are located, and how the revenue from fines collected is utilised to improve the safety of Victorian roads.

Additionally, the Department of Justice and Community Safety publishes and makes available to the general public the test certificates of compliance for every fixed road safety camera operating in Victoria on the CSL website.

This provides assurance to the public that cameras are regularly tested by an independent testing officer and are operating correctly in accordance with the Road Safety (General) Regulations 2019.

Every dollar received from road safety cameras goes to the Better Roads Victoria Trust where it is spent on road projects such as roads restoration, road surface replacement bridge strengthening and other roads safety improvements. Department of Transport will investigate enhanced reporting on projects funded from the trust to improve transparency and public confidence in this investment.

It is essential that the community has a high level of confidence and trust in Victoria's road safety camera system. This is particularly important as Victoria's road safety camera system continues to expand, with the 75 per cent increase in mobile camera operations and the roll out of 35 new fixed intersection cameras and two highway point-to-point camera networks as key initiatives under the Road Safety Strategy Action Plan 2021-23.

As part of the broader public communications on the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-30 and first Road Safety Strategy Action Plan 2021-23, the Department of Justice and Community Safety will develop a communications strategy to support the expansion of Victoria's road safety camera system and to increase public confidence in the system. The strategy will include improvements to the CSL website, such as the provision of additional information and data that emphasises the effectiveness of road safety cameras in changing driver behaviour and reducing the number of lives lost on Victorian roads. The Department of Justice and Community Safety will work closely with key road safety partners on the development of the communications strategy so that the best outcome for the strategy is achieved. The communications strategy is expected to be finalised by December 2021.

RECOMMENDATION 16:

That the Victorian Government publishes the datasets that underpin targets in the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021–2030.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

Across the Victorian Government, multiple departments and agencies collect and analyse road safety data. The Victorian Government is supportive of having transparency with the data used to inform the new road safety strategy and will publish datasets that are fit for publication under relevant privacy requirements and other data release considerations.

The Victorian Government will publish the summary report providing the insights generated from the analysis of data undertaken by Victoria's road safety partners. This summary report provides the outcomes from the analysis undertaken with data from Victoria Police, Department of Transport, Transport Accident Commission, Department of Health and Department of Justice and Community Safety for the five-year period 2013-14 to 2017-18.

The data gathered and utilised across the road safety partnership is not always appropriate to share in public forums, largely due to the personal and sensitive nature of the dataset, including individual names of people involved in crashes and contributing factors to the crash. This limits the Victorian Government's ability to provide this information publicly at all times.

RECOMMENDATION 17:

That the Victorian Government addresses delays in road safety data integration by enabling a central body, such as the Victorian Centre for Data Insights, to oversee the integration of road safety datasets from all road safety partners.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Victorian Government agrees that the road safety data assets held by road safety partners and allied agencies are of high quality and provide tremendous value to users for evidence-based decision-making. When shared, linked or integrated, these datasets will prove to be complementary and help provide more holistic insights around road safety that will assist with both operational and strategic initiatives that are aligned with the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. Measures will be taken to address some of the causes of delays in road safety data integration.

For the purpose of this recommendation and the state's response, the concept of integrating road safety datasets is an umbrella term that will support the use and access of a range of datasets including, but not limited to:

- Geo-spatial data,
- Crash and injury data,
- Traffic and speed data through the state's monitoring devices/assets (TIRTLs, fixed digital and mobile digital camera systems),
- Infringement data,
- Vehicle registrations,
- Drug/alcohol testing,
- External datasets (weather, calendar, population statistics, other third party).

Victoria's road safety partners will approach the Victorian Centre for Data Insights seeking its support and leadership to help establish the governance framework for integration of road safety datasets, with a particular focus on expediting the governance, approvals and assurance processes for data sharing across departments and agencies.

The implementation of a new governance framework and data sharing approvals process will help overcome some of the main issues resulting in delays to the effective data integration of road safety datasets. Once established, the road safety partners will manage the technical aspects of any ongoing data integration requirements

Current examples of progress in data management include work by the Department of Justice and Community Safety which has engaged the Victorian Centre for Data Insights on a proof of concept to support rostering of mobile road safety cameras as part of the state's Mobile Camera Expansion Project. This seeks to draw on key datasets from road safety partners to improve the rostering model. A data sharing heads of agreement is currently being considered which will provide the legal framework for the data sharing across project partners and support the timely integration of key datasets. The is a model that will be explored for future opportunities for linkage or integration of road safety datasets.

Work is also underway to enable the Centre for Victorian Data Linkage within the Department of Health to link 13 years of road crash-related data from across the Government's road safety partners (Victoria Police, Department of Health, Transport Accident Commission and Department of Transport). This linking refers to the process of finding and determining links between individual records across road-crash related datasets. Once completed, this will provide the road safety partners with greater insights into the levels and impact of road trauma in Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION 18:

That the Transport Accident Commission works with the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner and the Victorian Centre for Data Insights to make all traffic accident datasets publicly available in a way that enables simple and reliable independent analysis upholds privacy principles.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

Through its Data Vic Access Policy, the Victorian Government supports the release of government data to support research and education, promote innovation, support improvements in productivity and stimulate growth in the Victorian economy, as well as to enhance sharing of and access to information-rich resources to support evidence-based decision making in the public sector.

Under this policy, not all government-held data is suitable for release. Road safety-related data collected by road safety partners can contain personal and sensitive information that impacts both what can be released and how it can be released.

Victoria's road safety partners will conduct a review of all publicly available road safety-related data and identify opportunities where more road safety data can be made publicly available enabling simple and reliable independent analysis while upholding privacy of citizens within the Victorian community.

The road safety partners will seek guidance and assistance where appropriate from the Digital, Design and Innovation branch at Department of Premier and Cabinet to support appropriate governance and processes regarding the public release of road safety-related data, and with the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner to ensure adequate protection of individuals' privacy. The Victorian Centre for Data Insights does not have policy responsibility for open data or the Data Vic Access Policy.

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) holds extensive transport crash datasets and injury information and maintains linkage of these for monitoring, analysis and strategy setting on a regular basis. TAC does not own all of these datasets or have the right to publish them. The linked crash data holdings include primarily TAC claims, injury, cost and hospital data, Victoria Police Traffic Incident System (crash report) data and VicRoads Road Crash Information System (crash report) data.

The TAC will continue to publish road safety data quarterly, looking for improvements to the data made available through its quarterly reports. TAC also publishes daily fatality figures and monthly claims figures on the website and will continue to do this.

RECOMMENDATION 19:

That the Victorian Government reviews the recommendations made in the 2014 Road Safety Committee Inquiry into Serious Injury with the intention of implementing improved mechanisms for capturing serious injury data.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

In response to the 2014 Inquiry into Serious Injury, Victoria's road safety partners have progressed a number of recommendations made by the committee at that time to improve the capture and understanding of serious injury data. This has included:

- Examination of different measures of severity of serious injury, including threat to life measures as well as burden of injury measures. This work culminated in the adoption of the MAIS3+ categorisation of injury which underpinned the analysis and evidence base for development of the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030. The Maximum Abbreviated Injury Scale (MAIS) is an anatomically-based coding system with a scale of 1-6 to classify and describe the severity of injuries. An MAIS of 3 or greater indicates a level of injury severity commensurate with an 8-10% probability of death.
- Identification of different datasets that could be utilised to enhance our understanding of the true extent of serious injury.
- Establishment of a linked dataset as a proof of concept bringing together data from Victoria Police, Department of Health, Transport Accident Commission and Department of Transport. This work helped identify the potential benefits in linked road crash data and has resulted in the current work across the road safety partners to link 13 years of historical data.

Under our new Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, the Victorian Government will continue to develop improved mechanisms for capturing and enhancing our understanding of serious injuries by:

- Completing the linkage of 13 years of road crash-related data from across Victoria's road safety partners and establishing the protocols for ongoing data linkage of road crash-related data.
- Optimising crash and supplementary data sets through the development and implementation of a data and research strategy.
- Continuing to develop appropriate ways to categorise serious injuries, giving consideration to resource use measures, injury severity measures, disability measures and cost.

The Victorian Government agrees in principle to continue to review the recommendations made, while ensuring ongoing continuous improvement to road safety data into the future.

RECOMMENDATION 20:

That Victoria Police recommences capturing non-injury crash data.

This recommendation is not supported.

Changes to the Victoria Police Traffic Incident System (TIS) reporting were implemented on 1 July 2011. As a result, Victoria Police members were no longer required to log motor vehicle collisions on the Traffic Incident System in circumstances:

- When there is no apparent injury to any party, parties' details are exchanged, and the owner or representative of any other damaged property can be notified of the collision before the end of the investigating members shift; and
- In instances of an alleged 'hit and run' collision where there are no apparent injuries to any party and there are no offender details or chance of identification of the offender.

Police members are required to create a TIS report in circumstances where an injury is reported at a later time as a result of a collision previously identified as 'non-injury'.

The change to TIS non-injury accident reporting was part of a broader 'Up Front' project with the objectives to:

- Reduce time spent on front line administrative functions;
- Streamline existing front line police systems and processes;
- Reduce duplication of data capture and collection; and
- Reduce unnecessary data capture where possible.

The changes do not impact the provisions of the Road Safety Act 1986 pertaining to the 'duties of drivers' following a collision.

RECOMMENDATION 21:

That the Victorian Government expands its alcohol and other drugs testing regime to require all persons, other than passengers, who attend a hospital as a result of a road accident to undergo a BAC test.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendation as drafted relating to BAC tests as it reflects current practice. Under section 56(2) of the Road Safety Act 1986, a person over the age of 15 years involved in a motor vehicle accident, and subsequently presenting to a healthcare facility (such as a hospital) as a result of the accident, must allow an approved healthcare professional to take a sample of the person's blood for analysis. These samples are forensically analysed for alcohol concentration/the presence of a banned drug (as per the Road Safety Act 1986) and supports Victoria Police in their post-crash investigations. Penalties exist for any person not complying with this requirement.

In addition, section 55BA of the Road Safety Act 1986 gives Victoria Police the power to require any person they believe has been involved in a motor vehicle accident to provide a blood sample for analysis within three hours of the accident. To the effects arising from sections 56(2) and 55BA, the Government believes the intent of this recommendation of ensuring all persons involved in a motor vehicle accident are assessed for potential alcohol involvement as a contributing factor is currently being met.

The regulations pertaining to healthcare facilities obtaining a relevant blood sample as per section 56(2) of the Act were amended in 2018 to ensure this requirement did not inappropriately interfere with patient care. This included reducing the number of blood samples required for collection and streamlining associated administration processes. As a result of these amendments, Victoria Police report compliance amongst healthcare facilities has increased. The Government supports efforts that continue to ensure healthcare facilities can easily and readily obtain relevant blood samples of persons involved in motor vehicle accidents in accordance with the Road Safety Act 1986.

The Government notes the benefits of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) five-year toxicological study of seriously injured drivers referred to in the committee's supporting rationale for this recommendation. The findings of this study have provided excellent insights into the prevalence of a range of different impairing drugs in seriously injured drivers and riders. VIFM applied a full toxicological analysis to the 5,000-person study sample (1,000 per year). Given the relatively large sample size, the outcomes of this study can be extrapolated with a reasonable degree of confidence to the broader driver/rider population, and the Government in principle supports opportunities for similar research to be conducted in the future.

The cost and road safety benefit of applying a full toxicological screening analysis as implied through the findings underpinning this recommendation (i.e. any impairing substance) of every injured person, other than passengers, involved in a motor vehicle accident presenting to a healthcare facility in Victoria would need to be fully assessed to determine feasibility and efficacy. This activity is not part of the current or planned work program of investigations relating to enhancement, efficiencies or expansions of impairment related road safety activity

RECOMMENDATION 22:

That the Victorian Government reviews whether the age limit for learner drivers to complete a compulsory minimum of 120 hours of logged, supervised driving (including 20 hours of night driving) should be increased to 25 years old. The Government may also consider requiring all drivers to complete a compulsory minimum of 120 hours regardless of age.

This recommendation is supported in part.

The Victorian Government agrees there is merit in reviewing the road safety benefits for increasing the age limit for learner drivers to complete a compulsory minimum of 120 hours of logged, supervised driving (including 20 hours of night driving) to 25 years old. Current evidence strongly links driver maturity (along with sufficient supervised driving experience) with better safety outcomes for novice drivers. However, there is no clear evidence to support expanding the review to include 120 hours to all regardless of age and this requirement would pose significant social and economic barriers for adult learners. The expansion could also lead to unintended consequences such as an increase in unlicensed driving.

A 2017 review of the Graduated Licensing System (GLS) showed drivers aged 18 to 20 years old had a 20 percent reduction in their rate of involvement in fatal and serious injury crashes. There was also a 19 percent reduction in the involvement of fatal and serious crash rates for P-Platers in their first year of driving solo. However, no reduction was noted in the rate of fatal and serious injury crashes for drivers aged the 21 to 23. This is because drivers over 21 years are not required to undertake 120 hours of supervised driving and have a three-year P-Plate period, rather than a four-year period. They are not required to undertake a P1 year and the restrictions associated with this stage. Young novice drivers continue to be a high-risk group, and road crashes continue to be one of the leading causes of death for young people aged 18 to 25 years.

The research is clear, for young novice drivers, that there is a relationship between more supervised driving as a learner driver and reduced crash risk once licensed. The risk has been shown to be about 35 percent lower for those learners who have practised for about 120 hours compared with those who have had only about 40 hours of practice. In addition, early indicators from a 2020 study of crash involvement for drivers show more crash-involved novices (and older novice drivers 21-24 years) had failed licensing tests because they were less prepared. This research provides strong basis for further investigations.

The Government is concerned a new requirement to undertake 120 hours driving experience may be difficult for young people without easy access to a vehicle and supervisor driver and may consequently act as a barrier to social mobility and employment opportunities. The review will consider this issue in the context of balancing the benefits of extending the age limit. Any proposed increase to the current age limits or restrictions will require further analysis and investigation to determine the social and economic impacts, benefits and disbenefits and considerable engagement with the community prior to introduction.

RECOMMENDATION 23:

That the Victorian Government expands and more widely promote the L2P program to ensure there are no barriers to access by any groups and individuals, for example new migrant communities.

This recommendation is under review.

There are a number of existing programs that support in various ways the learning-to-drive needs of specific communities. However, it is likely there is unmet need. Identification of the availability, access, relevance and impact of existing programs, and an investigation to appropriately identify the scope and nature of the unmet need in the community will help to decide the optimal delivery mode for these communities.

The L2P program's primary purpose is to support disadvantaged young people who do not have access to a vehicle or a suitable adult to teach them to drive to obtain the 120 hours of supervised driving required under the GLS. Currently, eligible youths from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities participate in the existing L2P program, and one L2P program is translating the L2P mentor training material into Somali to support a range of their participants.

The impact and success of L2P has been significant, in part, due to the tailored nature of the program to meet the needs of the young people it services. The program in its current format is not suitable to for the general learner driver population, or the needs of specific populations such as the new arrival communities which have fundamentally different licensing needs and characteristics. For example, past driving experience and the average age of overseas learners differs for migrant communities to that of the target L2P program participants for whom the program was designed.

For learn to drive programs delivered to specific, diverse communities such as migrants, refugees, asylum seeker, CALD and indigenous communities, considerations must be made for program design and delivery of culturally appropriate programs and for a broader range of ages.

The Department of Transport delivers the Road Safety for New Arrivals (RSNA) program which is delivered by service providers in locations throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria. This road safety education program supports migrants new to Australia and those from CALD backgrounds over 21 years of age to become safer road users. The program objectives are focused broadly on road safety. However, some providers also have a greater focus on supporting learning to drive activities. The 2020 strategic review of the RSNA program conducted by Deloitte Access Economics found that there is a need for a program with particular focus on getting a driver's licence within new arrival communities.

The Victoria Inclusion and Reform Branch in Multicultural Affairs delivers driving lessons and driver safety programs via funding provided in their Strategic Partnership Program (SPP). In the 11 different regional and metropolitan locations where this placed-based program is offered, strategic engagement coordinators work with communities to identify challenges particular to their community and develop initiatives to support newly arrived refugee and asylum seeker communities.

Further information is required to quantify the unmet need in the Victorian learner driver population who experience barriers to accessing supervised driving, and to identify the communities and characteristics of the populations who will benefit from a program similar to L2P to support the development of safe drivers.

RECOMMENDATION 24:

That the Victorian Government conducts a 12-month pilot program of driver training virtual reality and simulation technologies to determine its long-term benefits.

This recommendation is under review.

The Victorian Government proposes to review the evidence base underpinning the use of new technologies to inform possible future pilots. The Victorian Government is firmly committed to evidence-based road safety education and driver training. Current information, including from organisations that provided submissions to the parliamentary inquiry, lack rigorous supporting evidence for the use of driving simulators, or virtual reality, to assist people to become safe drivers. However, in the rapidly changing environment of advancing technology, it is timely to re-visit the evidence to gain a contemporary perspective into the nature and value of use of this type of technology for driver training and ultimately improved road safety outcomes.

The Victorian Government's position is that a broad evidence base to support the value of simulation as a learning tool is required prior to implementing a pilot of simulated technology for use in driver training. Following consideration of this evidence, a decision would made to proceed with piloting a program developed on evidence-based, best practice principles. The review and potential trials or pilots would be subject to funding in future budgets.

Under Victoria's Graduated Licensing System (GLS), learner drivers aged less than 21 years at the time of applying for their Probationary Licence are required to accrue a minimum of 120 hours of supervised driving experience. Maximising both the quantity and quality of on-road driving experience is facilitated through Victoria's staged approach to learning to drive. This on-road approach encourages a gradual process where learners gain experience and develop the required skills and critical capabilities needed to deal with increasingly demanding and complex driving situations over a long period of time.

RECOMMENDATION 25:

That the Victorian Government conducts research on road trauma involving drivers aged over 60 years. The research should determine the specific risks posed and faced by older drivers targeted road safety policies to negate these risks.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Victorian Government supports the recommendation to conduct research on road trauma involving drivers aged over 60 years. Insights available through initiating our own, and analysing other, relevant research and data on a regular basis supports understanding risks both posed and faced by older drivers to develop targeted policies and other interventions to manage risks effectively.

To this end, Department of Transport funded research drawing on data from multiple agencies including TAC, VicRoads, Victorian Coroners Court and hospital systems which was completed in 2020 and titled "Development and analysis of a comprehensive data system to understand the occurrence, severity and risk factors of older road user crashes".

To update knowledge of specific medical risks faced by drivers, we have funded the revised edition of "Influence of chronic illness on crash involvement of motor vehicle drivers, third edition".

Findings from these projects have already informed review of medical fitness to drive national standards, consumer and health professional educational resources, and the need to help older drivers to access safer vehicles, which is a project included in the new Road Safety Strategy 2021 -2030.

Victoria's road safety partners collaborate via the "Older Road User Coordination Group" to share data, new research/ resources and promote initiatives. The group has supported addressing older driver/road user risks via :

a. regular older driver trauma and infringement updates
b. promotion of Seniors Card myki discounts for public transport use
c. seniors online targeted road safety information
d. health professional fitness to drive resources
e. older and medical fitness to drive consumer fact sheets
f. development of new online systems to support accessibility parking permit applications/renewals and submission of fitness to drive reports for our medical review process
g. changes to allow multi-purpose taxi program users to use ride share vehicles in addition to taxis.

The Department of Transport's Community Road Safety Grants Program funds the delivery of key education and community road safety programs across Victoria each year. The program aligns with Victoria's Road Safety Strategy and has a strong focus on people who are at a higher risk of being injured, such as vulnerable older road users. Over the last five years, older road user programs have received over $466,000 in funding which includes close to $263,000 addressing specific older driver programs. The Department of Transport will explore further opportunities to increase older road user grant applications in high-risk communities.

Government partners have promoted the community-based model of referral of at-risk drivers to VicRoads medical review to address the risk of medical conditions impacting on driving safety. Considering point-in-time data from June 2014 to June 2019 (excluding 2020 data due to COVID distortions), the average increase in numbers of drivers within our medical review system increased by 9.16 per cent for all age groups, whilst drivers aged 60 and over increased by 13.02 per cent over this same period.

Victoria's road safety partners will continue to coordinate research efforts to understand older driver risks, with a view to reviewing, enhancing and/or developing new polices and interventions to improve risk management and enhance road safety for this vulnerable road user group.

RECOMMENDATION 26:

That the Victorian Government works with the professional driver training sector to review professional driver trainer requirements with a view to identifying areas for improvement, including consideration of minimum age and other eligibility criteria, and developing of a Code of Practice.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Government supports the intent of the recommendation and agrees that well qualified driving instructors and a professional industry are important to support the learning to drive process. Novice drivers benefit by accessing quality driving instruction and guidance on developing road safety behaviours.

However, broader analysis than the committee has recommended is required to understand any deficiencies in the current driving instructor training and accreditation system.

In order to understand the scale and scope of deficiencies in the current system, a review should include reviewing the Road Safety (Driving Instructor) Regulations 2020, training competencies, accreditation processes and ongoing eligibility requirements to enable recommendations which will ensure driving instructors are well trained and subject to appropriate level of oversight.

Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPVV) has limited ability under the current Road Safety Act 1986 to take action when they receive a complaint about a driving instructor and where driving instructors commit a serious offence.

CPVV and VicRoads Registration and Licensing (R&L) division are committed to continuous improvement and will work together to identify operational and procedural improvements, and make recommendations for any regulatory adjustments to improve the behaviour and quality of driving instructors.

Any changes to be made to the current system need to be considered within the context of the R&L joint venture process underway. The specifics, such as developing a code of practice, and considering feedback provided through the Parliamentary inquiry and driving instructors more generally, will be used by both agencies in identifying areas for improvement and mechanisms for achieving this.

A formal review will be undertaken by the CPVV and R&L subject to availability of funding and consideration of other road safety funding priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 27:

That the Victorian Government works with the heavy vehicle sector to review the minimum training requirements needed to obtain a heavy vehicle licence.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Victorian Government supports the review of minimum training requirements needed for obtaining a heavy vehicle licence and the role that industry can play in achieving the review.

The Government supports increasing safety for those using the road for work. Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 recognises that driver licensing regimes contribute to road safety by ensuring those accessing the road meet appropriate levels of competency.

The Victorian Government agrees the heavy vehicle licensing system can be improved and is working closely with industry and other jurisdictions to develop reforms to improve the safety and competency of drivers obtaining or upgrading a heavy vehicle licence. It is critical to have an evidence-based approach to reform, to engage fully with all the sectors impacted by these reforms, and understand the economic impacts of introducing a more rigorous training and assessment process.

In 2017, Ministers as part of the Standing Committee on Transport requested Austroads undertake a review of the National Heavy Vehicle Driver Competency Framework (NHVDCF), which Victoria adopted in 2013 following national agreement to harmonise.

Key concerns have been defined through consultation with industry and research including Austroads review of NHVDCF Stages 1 and 2. The lack of prescription in the current NHVDCF will be addressed in the Austroads review of NHVDCF Stage 3 which will deliver a range of improvements.

Victoria is leading this final stage of work on behalf of Austroads and the other jurisdictions which will deliver framework, curriculum and training and assessment resources to ensure a modern rigorous evidence-based heavy licence system, which will then require implementation and operationalisation at a jurisdictional level. A harmonised approach is essential if the standard of training and assessment is to be improved.

The Austroads review has been recognised in the National Road Safety Action Plan 2016-2020, which includes an action to strengthen and harmonise heavy vehicle licencing arrangements to 'ensure drivers and assessors have necessary skills'. The review has also been recognised in the Victorian Freight Plan and Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2021 – 2030.

As an action from Victoria's Freight Plan, the Victorian Review of Heavy Vehicle Licensing and Employment Pathways, chaired by the Victorian Transport Association, was undertaken. The review focused on the Victorian heavy vehicle licensing system and employment pathways into professional heavy vehicle driving and has provided a solid Victorian context for the nationally focused Austroads program of work.

Considerable engagement continues to be undertaken with the broad range of industries which rely on heavy vehicles, including perspectives from all sectors requiring a heavy vehicle licence e.g. farmers, fire services etc.

Victoria's Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 will see work commence on reforming the Victorian heavy vehicle licensing system to improve safety and meet the needs of our growing freight industry.

To achieve a timely and efficient Victorian implementation, the Department of Transport aims to be ready to implement the revised NHVDCF and standards, recognising the need to improve outcomes as early as practicable.

Work is currently underway to develop the policy, processes, and systems to enable the reform. Significant emphasis is being placed on understanding the potential opportunities and impacts of the forecasted reforms across road safety, financial and economic, user experience and operational delivery.

RECOMMENDATION 28:

That the Victorian Government conducts research into drug testing that identifies the level of drug impairment in drivers.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Government supports conducting research into more effective ways to measure/test for drug-impaired driving in an effort to reduce the contribution of drug-related road trauma in Victoria. The Government is not supportive of attempting to establish an approach that determines different levels of impairment at this time because the current evidence does not provide for definitive threshold settings analogous with differing level of impairment. Any drug-related impairment to the driving task places drivers and other road users at risk.

Victoria Police adopts a mix of both presence and impairment-based drug driver testing. Both these approaches have specific and complementary advantages to addressing drug driving behaviour on Victorian roads.

The current roadside drug driving testing (RDT) program is presence-based and is not designed or intended to make determinations of impairment or degrees of impairment. RDT plays a critical role in establishing a level of deterrence against drug driving and detecting drivers and riders presenting an increased risk to road safety as it allows for mass screening. Modelling conducted by the Monash University Accident Research Centre shows RDT is associated with a quantifiable saving of drug-related fatalities and serious injuries.

Where a driver tests positive for the presence of one of the prescribed drugs (cannabis, methylamphetamine, MDMA), a second oral fluid sample is taken for analysis and laboratory confirmation by Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM). Laboratory analysis conducted by VIFM is in accordance with the 2006 AS4760 standard for the testing of drugs in oral fluid.

The standard sets out target testing levels that are both measurable and consistent with recent use, including designating a threshold level below which a formal finding of a drug presence is not made. VIFM also apply an additional 'buffer' on top of this testing threshold to further ensure detection reliability and consistency.

The practical effect of this protocol is that an individual who has very low trace quantities of a prescribed drug present in their system, possibly from prior consumption several hours or days previously, will likely be excluded from detection because the level does not exceed the laboratory reporting threshold. This process gives the Government confidence that the program correctly targets drug drivers representing an increased risk to road safety.

In Victoria, drug driver impairment is preliminarily assessed through a standardised drug impairment assessment protocol conducted by Victoria Police, consisting of three specific tests designed to test for motor and cognitive function. This is confirmed through the provision of a blood sample and subsequent analysis and endorsement of a forensic toxicologist. The Government acknowledges that the current preliminary impairment assessment protocol used by Victoria Police is operationally resource intensive, and a more streamlined impairment assessment protocol/test, supported by evidence, may provide both road safety and operational efficiency benefits. However, there is currently no scientifically validated technology available that can reliably and easily measure levels of drug driver impairment in a roadside context. The Government supports in principle research to investigate feasible and evidence-based methods for measuring drug driver impairment.

Blood concentration levels are the only biological parameter that are considered to have a possible correlation with drug impairment levels. However, there is currently no universally accepted approach for setting per se thresholds in blood analogous with impairment (for both cannabis and methylamphetamine), as evidenced by the different approaches adopted around the world. This is a significant barrier to establishing accurate per se impairment thresholds that are fair and equitable for all road users. The Government continues to monitor the latest research and advancements in this space.

RECOMMENDATION 29:

That the Victorian Government expands its drug testing regime to include testing for cocaine.

This recommendation is under review.

Victoria's roadside drug testing (RDT) regime tests for the presence of three proscribed drugs:

- Cannabis (THC)
- Methylamphetamine
- MDMA (ecstasy)

It is an offence under sections 49(1) (bb), (h) and (i) to drive with any level of these three drugs in a driver's system. RDT does not currently test for the presence of cocaine. Under section 49(1)(ba) of the Road Safety Act 1986, it is an offence in Victoria to drive whilst impaired from any drug or substance, including cocaine, which is determined through a preliminary drug impairment assessment and subsequent forensic toxicological analysis of a blood sample.

In considering the efficacy and road safety benefit of testing for other drugs such as cocaine at roadside, consideration should be given to the following factors:

- effects of the drug on driving performance;
- crash risk associated with the drug;
- level of drug involvement in road trauma;
- ability to test for the drug at roadside;
- impact on general and specific deterrence; and
- the additional cost of drug testing.

As an illicit stimulant, cocaine impairs driving performance by affecting concentration and attention, while inducing over-confidence, aggressiveness and increased risk-taking behaviour. Published research suggests cocaine represents an increased crash risk within the range of approximately 1.5 to 3 times compared to a non-drug driver.

Despite the accepted impairing effects and crash risk associated with cocaine and the increasing prevalence of cocaine in Victoria toxicological data provided by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) shows cocaine is present in a relatively small number of fatal and seriously injured drivers in Victoria relative to methylamphetamine and cannabis. VIFM analysis from 2015 to 2019 shows cocaine was present in 2.1 per cent of driver fatalities. In contrast, cannabis was present in approximately 14.8 per cent of driver fatalities and all stimulants (including methylamphetamine) were present in approximately 17.3 per cent of all driver fatalities for the same period.

Testing for cocaine at roadside also has operational impacts for Victoria Police, including using additional roadside drug testing technology and member training. Legislative amendment to the Road Safety Act 1986 would also be required. Victoria Police will work with its road safety partners to conduct a trial to understand operational impacts, cost and benefits as well as providing the regulatory framework to enable cocaine to be included in roadside drug testing.

Contrary to the rationale provided in the committee's report for this recommendation, the Government can and will continue to monitor drug-related road trauma trends, including the involvement of cocaine, to ensure the RDT program continues to target drugs that are significantly contributing to road trauma in Victoria. The Government will continue to monitor trends in community substance use and harm, including in relation to cocaine, as part of public health and road trauma surveillance activities.

RECOMMENDATION 30:

That the Victorian Government undertakes research into the prevalence of driving under the influence of prescription medication and collaborate with medical practitioners and pharmacists to establish effective messaging around the dangers of driving while impaired.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Victorian Government supports the intent of this recommendation, including increasing its understanding of the road safety risks associated with prescription medicines and the extent to which prescription medicines contribute to road trauma in Victoria.

As outlined in the committee's report, there are a number of different prescription and over-the-counter drugs that have the potential to affect driving performance by impairing cognitive and motor function. These include but are not limited to benzodiazepines, anti-depressants, opioids and anti-psychotics. Epidemiological studies have shown impairing medications can be associated with an increased risk of crash involvement, depending on drug class, particularly when not taken as medically advised, such as consumed with alcohol or prohibited drugs.

As part of the Government's Baseline Road Safety Research program, the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) is investigating the role pf prescription medicines in road crashes, including the association between prescription medicine use and crash risk and the effect of prescription medicines on driver performance and behaviour. As part of this research, MUARC is also investigating the proportion of drivers and riders that take different prescription medicines that can impair driving. The findings of this research are expected to be provided to Government in late 2021.

Supported by the Government road safety partners, the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine has investigated the presence of different drug classes, including those available by medical prescription, in a sample of seriously injured drivers over a five-year period. Information on the outcomes of this research was presented in the Government submission into the Inquiry.

Victoria's policy regarding 'Fitness to Drive' and prescription medicines aligns with the national Australian Fitness to Drive guidelines. With input from jurisdictions including Victoria, the National Transport Commission is in the process of updating these guidelines, which is likely to have a greater focus on prescription medicines, and this update will present an opportunity to further increase awareness among health professionals of the latest evidence and best practice approaches in this space.

The Department of Transport is engaging with medical and allied health professional bodies through the Medical Fitness to Drive Working Group. The multi-disciplinary working group discusses a range of topics relevant to prescription medicines and road safety, including data, research, coronal matters and opportunities for member education. The road safety partners also collaborate to deliver targeted communications to at-risk road user groups to raise awareness of the impacts of prescription medicines on driving.

The Government supports ongoing efforts of the road safety partners to engage and work with health, toxicology and road safety experts to increase understanding of road safety risks around prescription medicines, and to support informed decision making when prescribing medicines to patients where driving is a key consideration.

RECOMMENDATION 31:

That the Victorian Government continues to invest in the Behavioural Change Program for drink-and drug-driving offenders.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Government supports the recommendation that it continues to invest in the Behaviour Change Program (BCP) for drink and drug driving offenders. The Government believes the delivery of best practice behaviour change programs is a critical component of any approach to reduce drink and drug driving. As part of a Government road safety commitment, the mandatory drink and drug driver BCP supports participants to consider the underlying motivators behind their offending behaviour and provides support and referral to services to address problematic alcohol and drug use.

Commencing in 2018, the BCP for drink and drug drivers uses contemporary behaviour change methods and techniques to address the underlying determinants of drink and drug driving. Initial feedback from a large number of program participants across all three program components (drink driver, drug driver, intensive) indicate that it has provided a 'safe' environment for challenging underlying beliefs and motivators, as well as the opportunity for self-reflection and consideration of the consequences on others. The program has also enabled participants to consider their alcohol or substance use in more general terms and provides direct referral to support services where needed.

The Victorian drink and drug driver BCP is considered a model program for other Australian jurisdictions, reflected by jurisdictions expressing interest in potentially adopting the Victorian approach.

As a mandated program for all drink and drug driving offenders, it is essential the BCP can respond to any future increases in demand, such as those resulting from an uplift in drink and/or drug driving enforcement conducted by Victoria Police. Additionally, the BCP must continue to be accessible by all driver/rider cohorts, including those in outer regional/remote areas and those who are not able to participate in a group-based face to face setting for a specific reason, including COVID-19. This will require ongoing investment by Government for maintenance and quality and capacity improvement activities, including consideration of establishing an online operating platform for further accessibility and reach.

The evidence validating the important role of therapeutic-based approaches in addressing dangerous driver-rider behaviour continues to accumulate. It follows that such approaches may have utility in addressing other forms of unsafe driver behaviour associated with underlying cognitive or social dependencies. The Government will continue to investigate the role of therapeutic-based approaches to improve road safety outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 32:

That the Victorian Government determines the extent of fatigue as a contributing factor in road accidents and develop policies to reduce its impact.

This recommendation is supported in full.

The Government supports the need to determine the extent of fatigue as a contributing factor in road trauma and develop policies to reduce its impact.

It is estimated that driver fatigue contributes to approximately 20 per cent of all crashes and 10 per cent of all driver fatalities each year in Victoria. Determining whether driver fatigue was a contributor in a road crash is currently based on police assessment following crash investigations. Factors considered by crash investigators include the type of crash, vehicle speed, braking and steering inputs (or lack of), number of vehicles involved, time of day and crash location. Based on these assessments, the majority of fatigue-related fatalities in Victoria involve a single vehicle in a run-off-road scenario where the driver has fallen asleep behind the wheel and veered out of the running lane. Although crash investigation provides invaluable insights into the likely role of driver fatigue in crashes, it is likely an under-estimation. The Government supports investigating the efficacy of more definitive methods of assessing fatigue-related trauma to compliment current approaches.

One possible method arises from a project led by the Department of Transport that investigated the capability of new and emerging technologies to detect driver fatigue in a roadside context. Conducted under the 2016-2020 Road Safety Strategy, the Government committed $850,000 to this comprehensive research program. Project outcomes demonstrated that ocular-based technology, which objectively measures eye pupil responses to stimuli, is strongly correlated with increasing levels of driver impairment resulting from sleep deprivation.

This technology could potentially have a role in supporting Victoria Police in their post-crash investigations, particularly where heavy vehicles are involved. The technology is currently being assessed for its operational utility with Victoria Police, under controlled conditions, and whether any modifications are required to its operating platform.

The Government supports the need to continue to investigate policies and countermeasures that address the role of driver fatigue in road trauma.

The Department of Transport fatigue research project (mentioned above), which was an Australian-first study conducted in partnership with Monash University, also quantified the risk of crashing with differing levels of sleep loss, establishing a dose-response relationship between driver impairment, crash risk and sleep loss. The results showed the risk of crash involvement increases exponentially with increasing levels of sleep deprivation. For example, with no sleep within a 24-hour period, the risk of crashing was 15 times greater compared to an alert driver. The risk was 10 times greater with only three hours sleep and seven times greater with only five hours sleep respectively. These results can be used to inform future road safety campaigns to educate the community of the risks involved with driver fatigue and support behaviour change.

The ocular-based technology also has potential utility in future roadside enforcement of fatigued driving associated with falling asleep behind the wheel. The scientific validation of this technology to detect fatigue-related impairment has been completed, providing the evidence base to potentially establish a driver fatigue impairment assessment protocol, similar to drug impairment. Further investigations are needed to ensure the impairment assessment protocol is applicable in a real-world context, which could be achieved by conducting a field trial with Victoria Police. More broadly, the Government supports a focus on investigating other fatigue-related countermeasures and possible regulatory responses.

RECOMMENDATION 33:

That the Victorian Government works with industry and regulators to align fatigue management legislation where appropriate across the heavy vehicle and commercial passenger vehicle sectors.

This recommendation is under review.

People who use the roads for work or at work are a priority cohort under the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030, and fatigue management plays an important role in addressing road trauma associated with people using the roads as a workplace.

The Department of Transport is currently involved in the review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law which is being led by the National Transport Commission.

The review is a unique opportunity to improve the regulation of heavy vehicles and includes reforms to general safety duties for parties in the heavy vehicle sector, heavy vehicle driver fatigue management, heavy vehicle mass, dimension, loading and standards requirements, heavy vehicle access to the road network, and the broader use of technology and data for land transport purposes.

The heavy vehicle driver fatigue reform consists of an evidence-based review of current heavy vehicle fatigue legislation and is intended to deliver safety and productivity benefits to the heavy vehicle industry and the broader Australian community.

Although it is impractical to align fatigue management legislation while the review of the Heavy Vehicle National Law is underway, in the meantime, as detailed in our response to Recommendation 32, the Victorian Government will continue to investigate policies and countermeasures that address the role of driver fatigue in road trauma, including across the commercial sector.

RECOMMENDATION 34:

That Victoria's road safety partners work with Victoria's tourism industry to address the issue of road safety in south-west Victoria, particularly around the Great Ocean Road.

This recommendation is supported in principle.

The Great Ocean Road is arguably Victoria's most iconic scenic drive generating significant tourist interest. The Victorian Government is committed to engaging with the tourism industry and visitors and building on previous works undertaken in south-western Victoria to improve road safety related to the tourism sector.

During the 18/19 summer, 100 new "DRIVE ON LEFT" signs, and 100 new and repainted directional arrows were rolled out along the Great Ocean Road to provide simple and constant reminders to drivers unfamiliar with travelling on the left side of the road. This is on top of the hundreds of existing arrows and "DRIVE ON LEFT" signs already in place along the Great Ocean Road and across the busy inland routes that connect with the Great Ocean Road and Princes Highway.

Multilingual electronic signs display safety messaging at road worksites along the Great Ocean Road and inland routes in peak tourist seasons.

The Victorian Government's 'Visiting driver road safety initiative' focuses on visiting drivers travelling on unfamiliar roads in unfamiliar conditions. The initiative is modelled on the successful New Zealand international driver safety project and is being supported by major vehicle rental companies. Safety messages are distributed to visiting drivers through various channels including bilingual videos, digital advertising, social media and promotional materials within hire vehicles displaying the "KEEP LEFT" message.

The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions has received funds through the Australian Government's Geelong City Deal program to undertake further activities. However, this work is currently paused in the absence of international visitors.

Reducing the underlying risk on the Great Ocean Road and related tourist routes is also a key focus for the Government. The 2020/21 State budget included $272.4 million worth of road upgrades in the region, including:

- $140 million for road pavement works, bridge strengthening, geotechnical works, and safety upgrades along the Great Ocean Road
- $115 million for upgrading inland routes between the Great Ocean Road and Princes Highway West including pavement widening and rebuilding
- $17.4 million for rebuilding, resurfacing and widening roads, strengthening or replacing bridges and planning for future to support the Barwon South West Dairy Supply chain

These upgrades will support road safety outcomes in the region including for tourists.

RECOMMENDATION 35:

That the Victorian Government advocates for the Federal Government's Luxury Car Tax to be abolished.

This recommendation is not supported.

The Victorian Government cannot make a strong safety argument for the removal of the luxury vehicle tax. Many vehicles under the luxury vehicle tax threshold have a five-star ANCAP rating and advanced safety features such as lane keep assist and autonomous emergency braking. Whereas once advanced safety features were only available in cars that exceeded the luxury vehicle tax threshold, now these features can be found in vehicles under $22,000.

The Victorian Government does not consider the luxury vehicle tax acts as a disincentive for people to buy a car with advanced safety features and believes that the removal of the luxury vehicle tax would have very little direct impact on reducing road trauma.

Through the Victorian Road Safety Action Plan 2021-2023, we will invest in initiatives to encourage and accelerate the uptake of active/passive vehicle safety technology. We will also trial the removal of old unsafe vehicles from the Victorian fleet and support at-risk driver cohorts into owning newer, safer vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION 36:

That the Victorian Government considers expanding WorkSafe Victoria's role in relation to road safety, including making WorkSafe Victoria a road safety partner amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic) (and other relevant legislation and regulations) in relation to WorkSafe's role in workplace road safety increased collaboration between WorkSafe and current road safety partners to better address safety issues and improve outcomes in the context of workplace road safety.

This recommendation is under review.

WorkSafe Victoria has close working relationships with the members of the Road Safety Partnership and collaborates closely with the members on activities and initiatives to address road safety.

Employer duties under the OHS Act provide an important mechanism for WorkSafe to oversee employers' compliance with their safety obligations, including for workers on the road.

As part of the Victorian Government's response to the Inquiry into the Victorian On-Demand Workforce, the Government has supported in principle a recommendation to review and align laws which extend entitlements, obligations and protections based on work status – such as workplace health and safety, and insurance for work related injuries – to ensure on-demand workers are consistently and appropriately covered by and protected by our laws.

WorkSafe will continue to collaborate with the current road safety partners and consider further opportunities to strengthen WorkSafe's working relationship with the partners: through participation on steering committees, delivery of programs of policies and through the collection of data and sharing of insights and information pertinent to improving road safety outcomes for workers. This will help deliver on the strategic focus area in the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 to increase safety for those using the roads for work or at work.

Through a dedicated committee involving WorkSafe and the Road Safety Partnership, data gathering for fatalities and injuries at work on the roads and potential regulatory and legislative levers that can enhance road safety outcomes will be considered over the duration of the strategy, to address the cohort of people who use the roads for work.

transport.vic.gov.au