



**Police Federation  
of Australia**  
The National Voice of Policing

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The Secretary  
Joint Select Committee on Road Safety  
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## **Inquiry into Road Safety**

The Police Federation of Australia (PFA), representing in excess of 65,000 police officers across state, territory and the federal police, has had a long-standing role in providing submissions to and appearing before, parliamentary inquiries looking into road safety. It is Australia's police, along with their colleagues in the other emergency services, that deal with the daily carnage on our roads. They are faced with the unenviable task of informing loved ones of victims of motor vehicle fatalities and are often left psychologically scarred by the incidents. We therefore have a vested interest in endeavouring to reduce Australia's road toll.

The PFA strongly supports the government's target of zero deaths and serious injuries on Australian roads by 2050.

We note that the *Inquiry into Road Safety* has received numerous submissions from a variety of individuals, organisations and agencies that have great expertise in the area of road safety and we take this opportunity to thank them on behalf of our members for their continued work in this important area.

Almost 300 police officers (291) now have their names on the National Police Memorial in Canberra, having lost their lives in motor vehicle and motorcycle incidents or been struck by a vehicle.

- Motorcycle accidents 105
- Motor vehicle accidents 157
- Struck by motor vehicles 29

In June this year, QLD Senior Constable David Masters was laying road spikes to stop a stolen car at Burpengary when he was struck and killed and who could forget our four Victorian sister and brothers –

- Leading Senior Constable Lynette Rosemary Taylor;
- Senior Constable Kevin Neil King;
- Constable Glen Andrew Humphris; and
- Constable Joshua Andrew Prestney

who were tragically killed during a traffic stop on Melbourne's Eastern Freeway on 22 April 2020. That same month, well known nationally and respected SA Chief Superintendent Joanne Shanahan was killed in an off-duty accident in Adelaide.

The police family therefore clearly understands the significance of road safety.

## Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance

The Committee may be aware that for the past 12 years the PFA has partnered with the police charity, the National Police Memorial to run the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance.

The rationale behind the event is that each of the Australian Police Forces has a dedicated place of remembrance and reflection, where they pay homage to and remember their police officers who have died as a result of their service to the community. The plan was that police from all over Australia would ride their motorcycles from these special sites to the outskirts of Canberra where all riders would join together as a final gesture of police solidarity and remembrance and ride through Canberra to the National Police Memorial (NPM) for a short, but poignant ceremony.

The ride was planned to highlight three key things –

1. Remember fallen colleagues (noting that of the almost 800 names on the NPM, 105 of them were as the result of police motorcycle accidents);
2. Raise money for police related charities; and
3. Promote safe and legal motorcycling.

Over the 11 annual rides to date, numerous politicians, police commissioners, other senior police and thousands of police officers and other members of the police family have participated in the Ride, raising the awareness of safe and legal motorcycling.

We note that in media reports in the *Daily Telegraph* on 27 August 2021, the NSW Centre for Road Safety reported that motorcycle deaths have increased by 52% in the last year in that state.

The PFA and the NPM has been pleased to partner with Towards Zero (NSW) as the major sponsor for the past five years and we have indicated an interest to use the event on a broader scale to promote safe and legal motorcycling and would be happy to liaise with the Office for Road Safety to assist in such a promotion.

### **Road Safety a Key Police Function**

The PFA is conscious of the responsibilities of the respective jurisdictions in road policing and believes the Committee, whilst they might be tempted, should be mindful not to stray into areas that are the responsibility of the states when endeavouring to assist in reducing the road toll. The PFA is a strong supporter however of their being a collaborative approach taken to the issue.

Our starting point is the acceptance that high police visibility on our roads is the most important deterrent to dangerous driving.

Regardless of road and vehicle conditions, high profile road safety campaigns and other preventative measures, are vital. The only way to detect, deter and rid our roads of dangerous drivers is by police officers being out conducting high profile road policing operations.

There are also numerous examples of other serious crimes being detected and prosecuted as a result of someone simply being pulled up for a traffic breach only to be found to have been involved in other serious criminal activity.

## **Speed Cameras**

Speed cameras are the province of state and territory governments.

The PFA is of the view, that whilst speed cameras have a role in road safety campaigns, they should never be used at the expense of a visible police presence on the road. Speed cameras should only ever be a support strategy to visible policing.

In respect to point to point speed cameras, likewise, they should only ever be considered as a support strategy. In fact, concerns have been raised that point to point speed cameras may deter police from enforcement in those areas, as there's likely a perception that the cameras will deter speeding and poor road behaviour and therefore a police presence should be diverted to other areas.

The contrary could also be the case where drivers perceiving there to be limited or no police presence in certain areas may drive recklessly and dangerously believing they will be undetected.

## **Mobile phone offences**

Like speed cameras, traffic offences including the use of mobile phones while driving are the province of state and territory governments.

The detection and fines for this and other like offences should be left to those governments and police forces to determine.

## **Areas Where the Federal Government Could Devote its Energy and Resources**

### *Establishment of a Federal Roads Minister portfolio*

The PFA recommends that the federal government give consideration to the establishment of a Federal Roads Minister portfolio.

We note that the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development has portfolio responsibility for the regulation, safety and funding of roads. We also note that this portfolio also covers aviation, shipping and railways. As roads are possibly the most used means of transport/travel by the Australian community, the PFA believes it would make sense to consider establishing a separate portfolio of Federal Minister for Roads. Such a role could then have a direct link in liaison with the various relevant state and territory ministers responsible for roads as well as police ministers responsible for the enforcement of traffic laws.

### *Research*

An important area for the federal government is research in respect to road traffic and transport, and in particular, road safety. There are numerous organisation that undertake important research into a number of road safety areas and initiatives and we would encourage the government where practicable to continue to fund such research where appropriate.

One key area of research that could be explored is looking at factors that lead to drivers engaging in poor road behaviour. In the research article in *Applied Ergonomics 74 (2019)*<sup>1</sup>, researchers discussed the so called 'fatal five' behaviours (drink and drug driving, distraction

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<sup>1</sup> Salmon, PM., Read, GJM., Beanland, V., Thompson, J., Filtness, AJ., Hulme, A., McClure, R., Johnston, I. (2019). Bad behaviour or societal failure? Perceptions of the factors contributing to drivers' engagement in the fatal five driving behaviours. *Applied Ergonomics* Jan; 74 ,162-171.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0003687018302813>

and inattention, speeding, fatigue, and failure to wear a seatbelt). These are all major contributing factors to serious road trauma which are worthy of continued research.

### *Drug driving*

The issue of drug driving would be best pursued by a national standard. A recent report evaluating roadside drug and alcohol testing programmes in Victoria published in May 2021 reported the extent of the problem. The study showed “18% of fatally injured vehicle controllers in Victorian road crashes tested positive for Methamphetamine whilst 16% tested positive for THC. Combined, proscribed illicit drugs were present in over 25% of fatally injured vehicle controllers”<sup>2</sup>.

As evidenced in this report drug driving is a major road safety problem and the PFA believes the federal government could play an important role in funding further research into drug driving and specifically research for a national drug driving testing standard.

### *Road Infrastructure*

The PFA agrees that road infrastructure is a vital ingredient to road safety and is an important function for the federal government in conjunction with state/territory and local government.

We also support the Committee’s focus on rural and regional roads in this regard.

One important issue for police in road design, is having the capacity for officers to pull over offending vehicles in safe locations. Many roads have limited space on the road shoulder for safe stopping, thus putting police and potentially members of the public at risk from passing traffic.

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<sup>2</sup> Newstead, S., Cameron, M., Thompson, L., Clark, B. (2021) Monash University Accident Research Centre. Evaluation of the Roadside Drug Testing Expansion and Roadside Alcohol Testing Enforcement Programs in Victoria Report No. 355. [https://www.monash.edu/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/2564441/Evaluation-of-the-RDT-Program-and-RBT-in-Victoria-MUARC-Report-355\\_Updates.pdf](https://www.monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/2564441/Evaluation-of-the-RDT-Program-and-RBT-in-Victoria-MUARC-Report-355_Updates.pdf)

The PFA would support any requirement for road infrastructure that would alleviate such dangers for police and other motorists.

### *Road Safety Awareness Campaigns*

The PFA strongly supports the federal government's role in road safety awareness campaigns and as earlier indicated in our section on the Wall to Wall Ride for Remembrance and motorcycle safety, the PFA would be pleased to partner with the government in any such campaigns.

We particularly note the Yellow Ribbon National Road Safety Week campaign [Yellow Ribbon - Road Safety Education \(rse.org.au\)](#) and offer the support of the Police Federation to the Road Safety Education Limited and its partner agencies and organisations.

### *National Enforcement Funding*

Whilst most funding for enforcement operations by police and other responsible agencies comes from the respective state/territory government, the PFA believes there is room for the federal government to be involved in funding targeted operations of a national nature. Such funding should be done in consultation and cooperation with the relevant state/territory governments or agencies.

### *Vehicle Standards*

Another area that the federal government has a key role is ensuring the standards, particularly safety standards of vehicles sold in Australia.

The PFA has previously been provided with information about the difficulty crash investigators have in downloading data from some makes of vehicles after they have been involved in a traffic incident.



The PFA would be very supportive of the government ensuring that relevant data downloads available in such vehicles are readily accessible to crash investigators and other appropriate investigative agencies when such a vehicle is involved in a serious traffic incident.

### **Occupational Health and Safety for Police and Emergency Services Workers:**

The PFA notes the issue of 'trauma' being raised in several of the committee's terms of reference for this inquiry. Whilst we recognise the trauma caused to victims of motor vehicle accidents, the PFA is very conscious of the trauma caused to police and other emergency services workers through constant exposure to such incidents.

In November 2018 Beyond Blue released its ground-breaking research into the mental health and well-being of police and emergency service personnel across 33 agencies in every state and territory. More than 21,000 police, fire, ambulance and SES employees, volunteers and retired and former personnel took part in the survey, "Answering the Call".

Key findings of that survey included:

- One in three police and emergency services employees experience high or very high psychological distress compared to one in eight Australian adults;
- Over one in 2.5 employees and one in three volunteers report being diagnosed with a mental health condition in their life compared to one in five Australian adults;
- Employees and volunteers report suicidal thoughts over two times more often than adults in the general population and are three times more likely to have a suicide plan;
- Over half the employees surveyed experienced a traumatic event during the course of their work that deeply affected them;
- Poor workplace practices and culture are as equally debilitating, as exposure to trauma;

- Employees who have worked more than ten years in police and emergency services are almost twice as likely to experience psychological distress and six times more likely to have symptoms of PTSD compared to those with less than two years' service; and
- Three in four employees who had made a claim for psychological injury found the current workers' compensation process to be detrimental to their recovery.

There is no doubt that a large proportion of those emergency services workers suffering such injuries, are doing so as a result of their attendance at serious motor vehicle accidents and in the case of police in particular, having to deliver messages to grieving families about the loss of loved ones.

The PFA, in conjunction with the police charity the National Police Foundation, and supported by the federal government, have been working on programs to alleviate the suffering by members of such mental health injuries.

It is important that such funding and such programs are able to continue.

### **Issues Previously Raised by the PFA**

In the lead up to previous federal elections, the PFA has raised several road safety issues as well as issues around the safety of police vehicles.

#### *National Standards for Young Drivers*

In 2010 we sought a commitment that the Australian Government would work with states and territories to develop national standards for licensing of, and driver training for, young drivers, including –

- the engine power of vehicles;
- speed limits;

- restrictions on passengers and zero blood alcohol limits for L-and P-plate drivers;
- the minimum hours of training with a qualified driving instructor, including the logged hours of driving, that are required;
- standard penalties for breach of the rules for L and P plate drivers, including speed and alcohol limiters; and
- most importantly, serious incentives, including relaxed restrictions, for young drivers who undertake advanced driver training.

Our submission back then argued that there were dozens of potential initiatives that the Australian Government could be involved in that would help reduce the national road toll. They included –

- speed limiters;
- driver alcohol detection systems ;
- greater driver education, particularly for young drivers;
- tougher law enforcement;
- increased surveillance;
- black spot remedial work;
- removal or protection from roadside obstacles;
- shoulder sealing on numerous roads; and
- improved signage.

The list is potentially endless, however we specifically focussed on what initiatives could be implemented to reduce the deaths of young drivers, hence our recommendation for incentives to be introduced to encourage young drivers to undertake advanced driver training.

The key element of our recommendation centred around national standards governing licensing and training of new drivers and meaningful relaxation of those standards for qualified advanced drivers arguing that it would be a tangible step in addressing the death

toll amongst young drivers. It would signal that we don't want 'reckless or incompetent driving' and properly developed programs in conjunction with the states and territories, and potentially vehicle insurers to reduce the incidence of motor vehicle accident and deaths among young drivers.

Such an initiative, we suggest, would have the support of the parents of every young teenager, looking ahead with dread to the L and P plate years if we embarked on a national program planned to slash the young driver death rate.

Interestingly, in the lead up to the 2010 federal election, the Coalition, ALP and the Greens, were all supportive of taking a more nationally consistent approach to standards in road safety, particularly as it applied to young drivers.

*A national police vehicle standard including state of the art technology*

Whilst it might not be seen by itself as a game changer in saving lives on our roads, the PFA has previously argued for the development of a national standard for police vehicles.

Prior to the closure of car manufacturing in Australia, the PFA saw such an initiative as a positive for police, a positive for the community in police having access to the most up to date technology in vehicles and a positive for vehicle manufacturing in Australia.

The fact that we no longer manufacture vehicles in this country, should not prevent this initiative from being explored.

The following should be standard items in police vehicles in today's technological age:

- seats that accommodate the array of equipment on police belts and vests;
- in-dash large scale GPS;

- in-car video camera;
- data terminals with integrated touch screens;
- computers;
- advanced communications;
- automatic number plate recognition; and
- facial recognition systems.

Police nationally replace in excess of 5,000 vehicles per year. Not only would such advanced technology allow police to better do their job, by making all police vehicles all but virtual police stations, the cost saving in standardising such equipment across every jurisdiction and in every vehicle as opposed to adding pieces of equipment bit by bit would be substantial.

Interestingly, in July this year *News Limited* reported that a number of police jurisdictions in Australia were evaluating the US police vehicle, the Dodge Charger as a pursuit vehicle for Australian police forces, when only several years ago, Australia had the potential to be exporting Australian standardised police vehicles to the US.

Not surprisingly, and consistent with their response above to National Standards for Young Drivers, in the lead up to the 2010 federal election, the Coalition, ALP and the Greens supported efficiency measures for collaborative purchasing across police forces.

Of course, motor vehicles aren't the only piece of equipment that could come under collaborative purchasing arrangements across Australian policing and we have previously provided the Australia and New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) with a list of items that we believe could be included.

## **Conclusion**

The Police Federation represents many thousands of members across the country who are considered subject matter experts in the area of road safety, many of them who have devoted a good part of their working lives to ensure our roads are a safer place for the

community. Those same officers also get to witness first-hand, the carnage and heartbreak for families and friends when serious incidents occur on those roads.

In our submission we have put forward a number of suggestions and recommendations, but most importantly, we encourage the federal government to work collaboratively with state, territory and local governments as well as the myriad of other authorities and organisations who have experience and expertise in this space, to make our roads safer.

The PFA would be happy to appear before the Inquiry to expand on our submission if required.

Sincerely yours

Scott Weber APM  
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10 September 2021