



The Hon Darren Chester MP
Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
A/g Minister for Regional Development
A/g Minister for Local Government and Territories
Deputy Leader of the House
Member for Gippsland

ROADS TO RECOVERY STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

The Roads to Recovery (R2R) Program makes a valuable contribution to safety, economic and social outcomes in communities through supporting maintenance of the nation's local roads.

In the 2016-17 Budget, the Australian Government took a decision to provide an additional \$50 million on an ongoing basis to the R2R Program from 2019-20, to bring the annual allocation to \$400 million across all councils in Australia.

The Government also ensured that the R2R Program did not contain a sunset clause under the *National Land Transport Act 2014*, safeguarding the continuation of this important program.

1,300 people died on Australian roads last year and the Australian Government has been working closely with all levels of government to develop a strategy to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on our roads.

The current National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 sets out a plan using the safe system approach, safer vehicles, safer speeds, safer people and safer roads to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes by at least 30 per cent. This approach calls for a holistic view of the road transport system and the interactions among roads and roadsides, travel speeds, vehicles and road users.

Unfortunately, after a decade of good results, the trend over the last two years has been going in the wrong direction.

In reviewing the outcomes of the R2R Program, I am pleased to see that 27 per cent of funding received by councils has been spent on road safety across the life of the current program. A further 34 per cent of spending has been to maintain the road asset, which also has safety benefits.

There is a considerable body of knowledge that indicates that well-designed road improvements reduce the rate of road crashes and serious injuries.

A study of the Australian Government's Black Spot Program in 2012 examined the crash reduction benefits of a variety of road treatments based on a sample of 1,599 projects across the country.

The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics estimated that the Black Spot Program is reducing fatal and casualty crashes in total at treated sites by 30 per cent.

The study found that roundabouts are the most effective treatment, reducing casualty crashes by over 70 per cent. Providing new traffic signals and altering the traffic flow direction are the next most highly effective treatments for most severity levels, reducing crashes by more than 50 per cent.

We do not have the same level of information to be able to assess the benefits of the R2R Program.

I would like to work with local councils to ensure that the R2R Program is delivering the best possible outcomes in the area of road safety. When selecting projects, I would urge councils to consider the likelihood that the selected project will reduce fatalities and serious injuries in crashes.

It may be that projects that may not have been able to be funded under State or Federal Black Spot programs could be delivered under the R2R Program.

In terms of road maintenance projects, improving the quality of the road asset through re-sheeting and resealing will have stronger safety outcomes than simply maintaining the quality through routine road maintenance.

I note that pedestrian and cycling facilities associated with a road can be funded under R2R. I do not propose to change the eligibility criteria, but ask that such projects are only prioritised if their specific aim is to improve safety for vulnerable road users.

Councils could consider pooling R2R funding or Financial Assistance Grants to prioritise and jointly improve the quality of roads in a region with a known crash record. Similar to the greater adoption of asset management plans, councils could draw up road safety plans on a network basis in conjunction with neighbouring councils.

I have asked my Department to improve the reporting of safety and other outcomes from the R2R Program and I would like councils to provide additional information on the benefits and outcomes of each project. I encourage you to evaluate the projects completed and how they have benefitted the local network and community (for example, crash reductions or travel efficiencies), to assist us to better monitor and evaluate the program. I ask that this information be provided as part of the annual reporting from councils. My Department will inform councils of new reporting templates that will need to be completed as a condition of funding release for future years.

I am also requesting councils provide the Department with more regular updates on the status of projects which are receiving funding under R2R. I know previously some councils have informed us once works have been completed rather than before they have begun. I would like councils to inform us of every project which will receive R2R funding before they commence work on them and update us on their progress each quarter. A higher level of engagement than we have previously requested will allow both of us to benefit by keeping the local community informed of works underway.

The Commonwealth Government is committed to using Federal funding to improve employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians and I ask for this consideration to be applied to projects using R2R funding.

Lastly, I invite councils to write to me with ideas of how all levels of government could be improving road safety and the outcomes from the considerable investment we all make in the country's roads.

DARREN CHESTER

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