



Old Parliament House, Canberra

September 22nd, 2014

Earlier this year the ADTA National was invited to attend the National Road Safety Forum in Canberra. Conveniently this was being held 2 days after our national AGM was scheduled, also being held in Canberra, on the 20th of September. This is the third time this forum has been held since its inception in 2012 when it was also held in Canberra. However the forum took on a different structure this year moving away from the set-up of 4 concurrent sessions each focused on a particular area of road safety. Instead this year, the forum was an all in forum with all attending delegates involved in the same discussions and presentations.

An invitation only event, the 2014 forum saw over 80 delegates attend from a wide range of areas of expertise. The ADTA National was honoured to be the only representative from the driver training industry, again strengthening our position within road safety circles as a key stakeholder. This forum was centralised around a review of progress of the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) 2011-2020 and what areas need to be prioritised over the next few years. The forum was opened by the Hon. Jamie Briggs, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and regional Development. A full report of the forum and future directions was forwarded to the Assistant Minister following completion of the forum. A full transcript of the Mr Briggs address can be viewed on the forum website at the bottom of this report.

The rest of the forum was centred on a series of presentations on various areas of road safety including:

- National Road Safety – Emerging Priorities
- Improving Safety Through Infrastructure
- Vehicle Safety- light and heavy vehicles
- Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems
- Vulnerable Road Users

Full versions of all presentations can also be viewed at the website at the end.

Vulnerable Road Users

Some key messages that came from these presentations were the need to address vulnerable road users. There has been little done to address the issues around this key group of people and discussion revolved around what needs to be done to improve their safety. Vulnerable road users are defined as those that use our road network without the protection of being in an enclosed vehicle. It includes cyclists, motor bike riders and pedestrians. Many of the strategies announced as

part of the NRSS have either overlooked what needs to be done for this group, or have proven less effective than expected.

Whilst the NRSS is based around the safe systems approach and its four pillars, safer drivers in safer cars at safer speeds on safer roads, the question has to be as to what does a safe system look like for vulnerable road users? Are there differences to what we consider for cars? Are the pillars relevant to this group of people? This then means that this issue flows into the emerging priorities category.

Improving Safety through Infrastructure

There have been some great achievements made by improvements in infrastructure, however as always there is a long way to go. As 22% of fatalities occur at intersections, with 40% of those in urban areas, design of intersections needs to be addressed. A general consensus seems to be that roundabouts are very successful in reducing fatality rates and that effective roundabout design and implementation could help further in this area. I did raise the point that roundabouts always come up as the most misunderstood intersection and that any major increase in their use should be accompanied by a robust education initiative to ensure drivers are more aware of how to use them correctly. It was also raised by some motorbike riders that roundabouts can often be difficult and dangerous for them to use. This is because after coming to a stop at the roundabout, the motorbike then needs to be put immediately into a turn from a standstill and then begin turning the other direction. Apparently this is more difficult at smaller roundabouts where it is taken at a slower speed.

There have been some great gains in NSW in certain sections of highway upgrade. Heading North along the Pacific Highway, from Hexham to the Queensland border has seen travel times reduced by 1.5 hours in 10 years, decreasing the likelihood of fatigue related crashes, and fatalities on this road are trending down. The Hunter Expressway upgrade has seen a 75% reduction in the number of crashes per month. It has been calculated that for every dollar spent on the Black Spot Program saves \$7.70 to the community in road trauma.

Vehicle Safety

With great improvement in vehicle safety and technology, we are seeing improvements in fatality rates. However these safer vehicles may now be contributing to the increase in casualty rates as people are now surviving crashes that would have previously killed them. The average age of the Australian fleet is still 10 years and hasn't changed at all and the big impacts of some recent technology will still take time to have a huge effect due to this fleet age.

One recent technology is automatic braking. Current estimates suggest that if there is no action taken, and only relying on the natural uptake of this tech, there would be about 400 lives saved. However with government action, we could save around 680 lives.

The ANCAP program has also proven very effective at increasing demand for safer cars. Since 2008-2010 there has been a 40% increase in 5 star rated vehicles on our roads, bringing it up to 65% of all vehicles with this rating, while for passenger vehicles that has increased by 49% so that now 80% of all new passenger vehicles are 5 star rated. Electronic Stability Control uptake has increased 57% so that 93% of all new vehicles are fitted with it, while pre-collision safety features have increased 1.3% so that 5.2% of vehicles have it fitted.

Emerging Priorities

Apart from the vulnerable road users becoming an emerging priority, there were two other areas that came out as being of importance. Older driver crashes and casualty crashes versus fatal crashes.

Whilst we have made great inroads in young driver crashes, older driver crashes are trending up. With young drivers, we have been successful with regard to vehicles, the GLS, interlocks and speed, but with older drivers we need to further investigate what the safe system looks like for them. Older drivers tend to be over represented in head on crashes and crashes at intersections. Further to this, their choice of vehicle needs to be prioritised. Not only does vehicle choice directly impact the chance of a crash occurring, but also the survivability of a crash for an older person.

For years we have focused on reducing fatality rates, with the assumption that doing so will also reduce casualty rates. However what has come out is that these two areas may need different approaches to reduce their numbers. Vehicle safety has played a part as mentioned before, as crashes that would have previously killed someone are now resulting in serious injuries due to the added protection offered by the car. But this isn't the only reason. Often crashes that result in serious injury are very different from those that result in a fatality. In fact up to 50% of fatal crashes involve unusual behaviour, whereas serious injury crashes can commonly occur under normal driving circumstances.

Summary

As usual with many of these types of events, there is nothing immediate to come from it. There is often much discussion and talk of action, but it will take time for anything to come to fruition. Like the road safety conference, these events offer a great opportunity for networking and making yourself heard. Time will tell if what was said is actioned, and if we can in fact address these emerging priorities. If you would like to view the presentations delivered on the day, go to:

<http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/roads/safety/nrsf/index.aspx>

Regards

Anthony Cope

President

ADTA National