

## **Opening Address to BITRE Workshop 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

### **Lauchlan McIntosh ACRS President**

Thank you to the BITRE for the opportunity to give this Opening Address.

Earlier this month many of you and others met in Melbourne to discuss the Towards Zero Vision of Victorian Road Safety Partnership; a partnership consisting of the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), VicRoads, Victoria Police and the Department of Justice.

That was followed by a three day symposium involving the FIA Commission for Road Safety, Global NCAP and iRAP. The Prince Michael of Kent International Road Safety awards were made to several organisations including the Victorian Government, and the Prince also officiated at the Global NCAP Awards, one of which was to BHP Billiton and the launch of a new Australian National Road Safety Partnership.

Partnerships in road safety efforts were very much on show.

With the heavy Press coverage of the Victorian State Budget and the then upcoming Federal Budget, road safety, or should I say saving lives and injuries associated with road crashes didn't rate much press.

As I looked through the pages of commentary on the Federal Budget this week, I didn't find any mention of the benefits anticipated in the forward estimates of the vast sums being spent which will improve road safety.

There was a commitment of an additional A\$11.6 billion for an "infrastructure growth package", which is "heavy on roads", to boost spending by 2020. The benefits of that spending, which I do not need to remind you, are, in terms of reducing deaths and injuries, likely to be substantial. iRAP reported last week in Melbourne that crash costs are halved for every star rating level of improvement.

AusRAP analysis indicates that an investment of approximately \$4.7 billion would bring 85 per cent of the national highway network to a standard of 3-star or above with only 15 per cent comprising 1 or 2-star rated roads. The

improved road conditions are estimated to prevent more than 36,000 fatalities and serious injuries nationally over a 20-year period.

To be fair, there were additional funds for Black Spots and also remedial treatments on the national highway network.

But in the Budget papers there was no acknowledgement, no recognition of the potential reduction in health costs, social services costs, improved productivity in workplaces from this huge investment; nothing.

You know the numbers; 33,900 killed and seriously injured on our roads every year; at a cost of \$27 billion dollars year in, year out to the nation.

The Department has outlined the specifics of the Department of Infrastructure's very welcome commitment to road safety programs.

Four years ago the College, after discussion with the Productivity Commission and the Treasury, suggested to the then Government that the Commission undertake a broad ranging review of the full impacts of road safety across the economy. We made a comprehensive case.

The then Federal Government almost agreed but unfortunately changed Ministers responsible for the Productivity Commission, we lost some momentum and the last Labor Minister responsible, Bill Shorten, rejected the proposal.

We still believe the full costs of road crashes are not recognised nor are the full benefits of reducing trauma reflected in the national accounts. We were delighted with the announcement of the Coalition road safety policy prior to the last election which included the following statement;

*"The Coalition will task the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) with undertaking a review of the full impacts of road trauma.*

*The review will evaluate the benefits and costs associated with the different road safety approaches adopted by various jurisdictions, both domestically and internationally. The review will include an examination of the whole road safety*

*system, including the benefits and costs of measures designed to encourage safer drivers, build safer roads and drive safer cars.*

*The review will help to inform further policy development and a collaborative approach to reducing road trauma.*

*The review is a necessary precursor to developing more effective and more targeted approaches to improving road safety.”*

We were also pleased that the Coalition recognised the value of collaboration and cooperation with bodies such as the ACRS, the NHMRC, the ARC and many others to build scale in research and the development of road safety initiatives.

We do need to determine the overall extent of the current economic burden of road trauma, so we have a clear baseline for measuring progress and of course the real benefit to the economy from killing and injuring less from road crashes.

The BITRE study needs to capture the full cost of road trauma across the economy. This has to be more rigorous than any previous study. It can build on them, but it needs to take in world best practice measurement for assessment and comparison. It must identify gaps and highlight weak data.

The study needs to specifically address the ripple effects (or the multiplier effect) across the whole economy and set up a model which will help prioritise and or demonstrate the impacts of reducing trauma in different ways.

Costing benefits will of course be problematic as there are many unknowns, but we must use the most up to date data. Many of these may be outside the current “road safety” portfolios...ie post trauma care and rehab, insurance (pay as you drive), safer and connected cars, trucks and buses...all road vehicles, innovative and driverless and assisted driver vehicles, enhanced enforcement , and of course alternative modal transport encompassing new methods.

This work will be difficult without a nationally agreed definition of serious injuries, and an accurate data base for serious injuries, but we must make the best assessment we can.

There is evidence of a rise in the number of serious injuries. In fact BITRE has modelled a scenario of road crash injuries increasing from around 33,000pa today to 45,000pa in 2030. This number and the impact on the economy seems to have escaped the attention of the Treasurer in framing the recent Budget.

We must ensure we look beyond solutions which “blame the driver”. The systems approach must be at the forefront of this analysis. This does not mean ignoring driver behaviour, but it has to be put in the context of a safe system; safe roads, safe vehicles, safe people and safe speeds.

Road trauma must be adequately highlighted as an extensive public health issue.

We should see greater recognition of the impacts across all portfolios and sectors.

The make-up of the group here today in my view reflects our limited ability to look out for the ripple effects beyond the road safety sector. You and I are what I might call direct participants. Part of the regular “road safety establishment”.

The detailed survey undertaken prior to the workshop today has a list of well know road safety issues and solutions but I notice in so many areas the costs and benefits are listed as , “unknown”, “not discussed” or “it all depends”. We have to do better than that!

We need to reach out to bring in other partners, to hear how road crash outcomes affect them. Remember the task is to identify costs and benefits.

There is a raft of new technologies and personal transport systems already being introduced which will be commonplace in less than a decade. As the President of ITS America Scott Belcher said in Melbourne last week we are at a “transformation in transport”, led by the communications innovations which are changing driving needs and habits as well as transport itself. Safety management and impacts will be radically different from now on.

Where are our business bodies, our chambers of commerce, our unions, the trucking industry, and our insurers? They have with a direct interest in reducing the impacts of road trauma.

Where are the Institute for Health and Welfare, the AMA, tourism promoters, our workplace safety authorities, the legal profession, trauma support groups, the CSIRO? They also have a direct interest in contributing to the assessment of what the Coalition called “the full impacts of road trauma”

A recent UN Declaration on road safety as part of the Decade of Action included this component;

“Reiterates its invitation to Governments to take a leading role in implementing the activities of the Decade of Action, while fostering a **multi-sectoral collaboration of efforts that includes academia, the private sector, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, including national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, victims’ organizations and youth organizations, and the media.**”

This BITRE review can foster such collaboration. It must not be a desk review of known work using just the regular establishment, it has to drill down into the real costs, the real benefits of saving lives and injuries across the economy, not just today, but for the transformation ahead.

It can foster new multi-sector collaboration or partnerships. As I noted earlier the new Government has a clear policy to encourage this, and it is up to us to help in making them and also making them work.

I believe from what transpired in Melbourne last week that a new and emerging interest is beginning across a wider section of interests, recognising the costs and burdens of unnecessary road trauma.

The announcement this week of a Parliamentary Friends of Road Safety with 44 members already also demonstrates a new, wider interest. I hope this will include cross bench members including the new Motorists Enthusiasts Party.

We have been calling for political leadership; well here it comes; so we will need to learn to work with this new and welcome initiative.

Let us use today as a step to begin a new, effective, economic process. Remember, costs and benefits.

Perhaps we will be able to demonstrate success with a mention in next year's Federal Budget the real economic benefits of improving road safety results.

In the longer term, the lives saved and the injuries avoided will be a greater measure of success.

I urge you all to work constructively on this vital project.