RACT State Submission 2023–24

October 2022

RACT enjoys a trusted position and extensive market penetration in the community.

More than 210,000 Tasmanians are RACT members. We are the largest and strongest member organisation in Tasmania and an award-winning fully Tasmanian owned insurance company.

Formed in 1923, RACT is an apolitical and independent transport infrastructure, road safety and mobility advocate. We are committed to supporting and furthering the interests of Tasmanians and we do this through a comprehensive program of consultation, education, awareness and public advocacy.

RACT is represented by senior staff in a number of stakeholder reference organisations in Tasmania and undertakes structured liaison with government and other stakeholder groups.

Nationally, RACT is a constituent member of the Australian Automobile Association (AAA), which represents some 8 million Australian motorists, and is represented on the board of the Insurance Council of Australia.

RACT is a regular contributor to the committees and forums of the AAA and the ICA.

Internationally, RACT has joined with other Australian motoring organisations as a member of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) to work on road safety and related issues at a global level.

RACT's advocacy and public policy activity is defined by a series of policy documents developed and endorsed by the RACT Community Advocacy Committee and RACT Board.

These policies have been informed by history, experience, statistical analysis, consultation, industry knowledge and our members.

RACT Budget Submission in summary

In Insurance

The RACT urges the State Government to:

- Match Australian Government investment in resilience measures (stronger homes and public infrastructure), lifting national investment to at least $400 million per annum. This would require a $46 million annual investment by the State Government.
- Seek Federal Government incentives to remove state taxes and charges on insurance products to improve rates of underinsurance and noninsurance.

In Road Safety

The RACT urges the State Government to:

- Fully fund the extension and operation of the automated enforcement camera network to 32 units through fines from the network.
- Establish a road safety directorate that drives a whole-of-government approach to road safety and reports directly to the relevant minister.
- Fund the Department of Education to introduce road safety education in all Tasmanian schools.

- Grant RACT $400,000 for a Driver Reviver program. **(see attached submission now before the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport).**

In Mobility

The RACT urges the State Government to:

- Reduce peak-hour traffic congestion by:
- Introducing staggered working hours in the State Service.
- Investigating the establishment of suburban work hubs to reduce State Service employee travel (which will reduce travel costs, travel time, congestion and vehicle emissions).
- Incentivising State Service employees to adopt alternative transport modes.
- Encouraging work-from-home.
- Extending the Derwent ferry service.

Insurance

The impact of bushfire and flood disasters in Australia is adding to cost-of-living pressures on Tasmanian households as a result of increased insurance premiums.

The risk for Tasmanians is that they will under-insure or not insure as a result of these and other cost pressures on household budgets.

The RACT aligns with the Insurance Council of Australia's policy proposals, outlined in the ICA's Building a More Resilient Australia, which is now before the new Federal Government.

As the ICA says:

> *Extreme weather events are putting Australian homes, communities and livelihoods under pressure and increasing the financial risk to Australian governments. Investing in resilience protects Australian households, can improve access to affordable insurance coverage, and reduces the risk to taxpayers of providing direct financial assistance. Resilience is a win for households, a win for business, and a win for governments.*

As the State Government has indicated a strong Budget focus on these pressures, particularly on low-income and vulnerable Tasmanians, the RACT urged the Government to consider the following:

- Abolish duties, levies and charges on insurance products which increase the cost of premiums and discourage adequate levels of cover.
- Match investment by the Federal Government in extreme weather resilience measures.
- Support and contribute to the establishment of a national natural peril data centre to enable better land-use planning by governments and developers to mitigate the risk of bushfire, flood and other extreme weather events.
- Support amendments to national building codes to include a resilience and future risk standard.

Road safety

Tasmanians want to be safe on our roads.

That has been clearly demonstrated by RACT members in their responses to our quarterly surveys.

It has been reinforced by an RACT survey conducted to inform our submission to the Legislative Council Select Committee into Road Safety in Tasmania.

It has been highlighted by the 93 submissions to that inquiry from both individuals and organisations.

The themes arising from those submissions are consistent with the voice of our members – they want better, safer roads, better driver education, better enforcement.

While the inquiry is unlikely to report on its findings and recommendations in time to inform the 2023-24 State Budget, there are many actions government can take now.

For example, the RACT has argued strongly for the renewal and expansion of Tasmania's road safety camera network and the Government has responded.

Tasmania Police has responded to public concerns with its decision to reform its Traffic branch, increase its visibility on our roads, establish a Highway Patrol, and to support technology that enhanced its enforcement and deterrence regimes.

The State Government has already enhanced the driver training regime and will have recommendations before it following a review of the motorcycle training regime. That will fall outside the timeline for submissions to the 2023-24 Budget but there should be a contingency in place in 2023-24 to action this critical response to the over-representation of motorcyclists in our road trauma statistics.

This Budget submission outlines actions that can be funded in 2023-24 and beyond to address the crisis on our roads.

These actions have consistently been advocated for not just in Tasmania but nationally by Australia's auto clubs through their membership of the Australian Automobile Association.

Some of these actions will be part of the National Road Safety Action Plan, which must be underpinned by all states aligning their policies and their action plans to cut death and serious injury on our roads.

Many of the RACT recommendations to the Upper House inquiry reflect the need for a consistent national alignment.

They are also the foundation of this Budget submission.

Road safety funding

The 2023-24 State Budget should fund the following actions to address these road safety challenges:

- Renew and extend the state's road safety camera network of fixed and mobile cameras. The Government has committed to an initial rollout of eight new cameras followed by another eight in 2023-24.
- The RACT urges the Government to adopt a target of 32 cameras.
- Fully funded by the revenue from the network. In that way only lawbreakers fund the system.

- Establish a road safety directorate that reports directly to the responsible Minister and has the authority to drive an all-of-government approach to road safety.
- Quarantine the road safety levy from any further funding of the camera network.
- Establish a new speed-limit-setting regime to ensure a consistent approach across the entire road network, both state and local government.
- Establish and fund a regime to build the skills and capacity of local government to design, construct and maintain its road network in line with Safe Systems principles.
- Safety-rate the Tasmanian network, both state and local, to ensure speed limits are consistent with the physical limitations of the road.
- Adopt the Victorian Safe Systems Assessment Framework to ensure safety is given the highest consideration when designing and constructing roads and highways.
- Develop 10-year programs for all Tasmanian highways to ensure that framework is implemented consistently across all projects and that there is public transparency around the process. We note that the Government has committed to 10-year plans for the Huon and Channel Highways.
- Design all highway improvements to meet the 3-star AusRAP rating.
- That all State Government departments and government business enterprises complete the conversion of their fleets to 5-star safety-rated vehicles.
- That all State Government departments and government enterprises ensure road safety is an essential element of workplace health and safety regimes.
- That Worksafe Tasmania be given the resources to ensure road safety regimes are implemented in all private-enterprise businesses and to monitor compliance.
- Ensure vehicle age, safety rating and roadworthiness data is gathered in the investigation of crashes.
- Review the licensing and regulation of Tasmanian driving schools and instructors to ensure they meet the standards required to operate under the GLS.
- Launch a recruitment program for driver mentor volunteers to ensure the program can reduce waiting times and meet demand in 2023-24.
- Review road safety education in Tasmanian schools to ensure the programs delivery and content is best practice.

Infrastructure

- Annually review the State Roads maintenance budget (currently $100 million a year over the next three years) to ensure it fully accounts for the rising costs of fuel and raw materials.
- Continue to develop and expand 10-year programs for all Tasmanian highways to ensure that framework is implemented consistently across all projects and that there is public transparency around the process. The Midland Highway project illustrates what can be achieved through a consistent program of works based on a firm 10-year plan and long-term funding commitments from both the State and Federal Governments.

- Given the $100 million allocated to the Tasman Highway in the 2022-23 Federal Budget and the $30 million subsequently allocated by the State Government as part of the federal-state funding agreement for our highways, a firm 10-year plan for the highway should be a top priority in 2023-24.
- Further increase support for the Civil Construction Federation above the present $1 million a year committed to in the 2021-22 State Budget to build workforce skills and capacity in the sector.
- Urgently fund a safety-rating program for the Tasman and Huon Highway corridors and set speed limits consistent with the quality of the road. There are significant sections of these highway where infrastructure upgrades are years, or decades, away.

This must continue to be the template for all future highway upgrades.

Notwithstanding the public concern about the standard of the Bass Highway and the maintenance challenges, the consultation regime for the corridor is delivering engagement, transparency and a program of works based on greatest need, particularly around safety.

A 10-year highway plan – which the RACT wants for all of Tasmania's major highways – allows informed forward planning for road users, the civil construction and professional engineering services sector, and local government.

For local government, improved highways networks impact on planning regimes in the areas the major routes connect and pass through, as safer and efficient roads have a positive economic impact in underpinning commercial and residential growth.

Ten-year plans also allow forward planning in connecting the local government road network to the state network. Local government, through Tasmania's 29 councils, is the state's biggest road manager, controlling 14,000 kms, compared with the state's 3,700 kms.

While the RACT has welcomes the continued flow of Commonwealth funding for Tasmania's highways, there are several key impediments to progress:

- Insufficient support for local government to maintain their road network.
- The capacity and skills of local government to deliver road infrastructure to a standard that meets the Safe Systems approach to road safety.
- The capacity and skills within local government to safety-rate roads under their control.
- Significant delays in project delivery because of capacity shortfalls across both the State Service and the civil construction and professional services sectors. These problems have been raised with government by the Civil Construction Federation, Roads Australia and the RACT.
- The state urgently needs a training regime that provides the skills needed to deliver major infrastructure projects on time and on standard. Promised changes by the State Government to the TAFE system are designed to address this problem but in the short to medium term there is no easy solution.

The RACT policy position on highways standards

- RACT strongly believes there is a need to ensure the state and national highway network is rated and maintained at no less than three stars under the AusRAP scheme by 2030.

- RACT also believes all other local government or privately owned roads should be maintained to Australian standards.
- Road maintenance and road infrastructure investment were the top two member concerns in RACT's 2020 Member Survey.
- RACT advocates for better road safety outcomes for all Tasmanians through safe roads, to reduce Tasmania's road toll and serious injuries.
- Safe roads can help reduce crashes and minimise the severity of a crash. Common crashes are caused by a vehicle leaving the road, side impacts at intersections and head-on collisions and collisions with pedestrians and cyclists (Transport Accident Commission, 2018).
- Designing roads to minimise the consequences of collisions has the potential to significantly reduce death and injury for road users. This can include traffic control devices, such as traffic signals, pavement markings and signs (Royal Automobile Association, 2016).
- Multi-lane rural highways can reduce crashes linked to inappropriate overtaking manoeuvres, reducing driver frustration, and improving road capacity.
- The installation of roundabouts at intersections, as well as run-off road preventions such as roadside barriers, highly visible lane markings, wider sealed shoulders and medians, tactile ripple strips and flexible wire barriers can reduce common types of crashes (Transport Accident Commission, 2018).

Under the Safe Systems approach to road safety, which has been adopted by all Australians states and the Commonwealth, there is an acknowledgement that humans make mistakes.

We should therefore design our roads and highways so that the consequences of those mistakes are mitigated.

Newly constructed sections of highway should achieve a safety rating of no less than four stars. This should include:

- Multiple lanes, improved lane widths, sealed shoulders (particularly on cyclist routes), visual cues and delineation, highly visible line markings, audible edge lines, medians, flexible wire rope barriers, safe overtaking opportunities no more than 7-8 minutes apart, as well as turning facilities and stopping bays.
- Increased funding for road maintenance, so that it is proportional to road project investment, in order to improve the long-term quality of the Tasmanian road network. This must include the monitoring and auditing of road standards.
- Prioritising necessary safety upgrades to rural and urban roads and highways in areas where there is high traffic, high risk and elevated crash numbers.

Electric Vehicles

The RACT notes the government's proposed road user charge for zero and low-emission vehicles from July 1, 2027, announced in the 2021-22 State Budget

In line with other state motoring organisations and the Australian Automobile Association, we want to see a consistent national application of taxes, incentives and charging infrastructure standards.

The Tasmanian stamp duty exemption on the sale of new and used EVs introduced on July 1, 2021, and due to expire in July 2023, should be extended to further encourage EV sales.

One impediment to the switch to electric vehicles is the average age of the Tasmanian vehicle fleet – 13 years compared with 10 nationally – set against lower-than-average incomes when compared with other states.

Government and government business enterprises can assist change by moving to have all their fleet vehicles electric-powered.

The well-established public-sector fleet vehicle turnover policy will inject more EVs into the used-vehicle market, thereby hastening uptake and at a price that makes EVs more accessible and therefore more likely to be adopted.

It will also encourage an extension of the charging network and an investment in service and repair centres and the training of staff.

Mobility

The RACT's 30-Year Mobility Visions for Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston was released in 2019 with strategies to reduce transport emissions and congestion, encourage other transport modes, and increase public transport patronage.

The recently released Greater Hobart Plan – a joint initiative by the four Greater Hobart Councils and the State and Federal Governments – largely aligns with that vision.

Similarly the strategic initiatives by the Greater Launceston councils align with the RACT's vision for the region.

The solutions range across land-use planning, infrastructure to support future mobility choices, technological innovation, and changing work patterns.

The RACT vision focuses on infrastructure, land-use planning, public transport, active transport, social and community cohesion and future technologies – all themes that are matched by the Greater Hobart Plan and by Greater Launceston.

The solutions outlined by the RACT are broadly addressed in the draft Greater Hobart Plan and reinforced in the State Budget submission 2022-23 by the Greater Hobart Strategic Partnership. The RACT strongly supported that submission and urges the Government to fully implement the funding as outlined by the Partnership.

They closely match the assumptions and the drivers needed to meet the RACT vision.

The RACT in its recent submission on the Tasmanian Planning Policies Consultation Draft reinforces the vision outlined in 2019 and aligns with the draft Greater Hobart Plan and the Greater Launceston initiatives.

That submission said, in part:

> *The RACT has broadened its focus from the motor vehicle and those who own and operate one, to the wider challenges, benefits and consequences that flow from their use.*
>
> *It addresses a much deeper interest and understanding by our members of the evolving nature of transport in all its forms and their concerns about the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and of the Tasmanian environment.*

Good land-use planning is pivotal in delivering on those ambitions by ensuring the Tasmanian quality of life is not only maintained but enhanced.

We want to see Tasmania's planning system used to help reduce congestion.

We want to see governments focus on how major development can impact traffic congestion.

We support the development of settlement strategies for our cities that encourage people to live closer to work, school, public and active transport as well as community spaces.

The RACT wants to see all levels of government develop a settlement strategy for key urban centres.

They must consider mixed-use hubs in urban areas that include infill residential development and densification in proximity to active transport, high frequency/rapid public transit, as well as employment, education, retail, services, recreation and community spaces.

The RACT supports the development of higher density hubs in existing outlying suburbs. These areas can also cater for the decentralisation of industries, services and attractions.

The RACT has also advocated for limiting the size of urban growth boundaries to reduce the continued development of greenfield sites in outer Tasmanian suburbs and on urban fringes.

The RACT notes there has been progress on a number of initiatives which are championed in the RACT vision and are being delivered by the Hobart City Deal partnership and actions by individual councils.

- The Derwent ferry trial and proposed extension of the service.
- The South-East Traffic Solution (completion of the Airport Roundabout and the consultation on the duplication of the Midway Pt-Sorell causeway.
- The introduction of e-scooters as a mobility choice (but limited to Hobart City local government area).
- Work on introducing an integrated ticketing system for public transport.
- Examining options for a new bus transit centre in Hobart.
- Enforcing clearways in Macquarie and Davey St during peak hours.
- Work on southern transport solutions, which include a fifth, rapid-transit, lane on the Southern Outlet.
- Extending park-and-ride facilities in Kingston to encourage the uptake of public transport.
- Awarding of tenders for the new Bridgewater Bridge.
- Development of network operation plans for Hobart and Clarence.
- Go-ahead for new walkways and protective fencing on the Tasman Bridge.
- The release of a City of Hobart Precincts Plan.

There are also a number of matters unresolved or yet to be progressed that will be critical to the final version of the Greater Hobart Plan and the associated Implementation Plan.

- The future of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor.
- Changing work patterns as a result of the pandemic.
- Planning and funding of a joined-up active travel network for Greater Hobart.
- The three-year review of the Hobart City Deal, which is due this year. We note that the Hobart City Deal Implementation Plan update already gives a detailed picture of progress.
- The Tasmanian Housing Strategy, which is flagged to go out for consultation in July this year.

- The formation of the Housing Commission.
- Finalising the Tasmanian Planning Policies.
- How the proposed update to the Southern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy enables the land-use reform required to allow the ambitions of the Greater Hobart Plan to be realised.
- Growth outside the four Greater Hobart councils.
- The complexion of councils after the October local government elections.
- The report to the State Government on the future of local government.

The change in work patterns, with more people working from home, has seen some declines in traffic congestion.

The RACT therefore sees an opportunity for the State Government to fund several initiatives, including:

- Permanently establishing hybrid working conditions in the State Service, including working from home, four-day weeks, staggered work hours, and the establishing of work hubs close to her employees live.
- Offering incentives for employees to adopt other transport modes, including car-pooling and public transport.

These will reduce congestion, travel times, and vehicle emissions – a fundamental aim of the Greater Hobart and Greater Launceston plans and the RACT 30-Year Mobility Visions for the two cities.

The RACT recognises the unity of purpose already demonstrated by the four Greater Hobart councils and the State Government in settling on one vision and one Greater Hobart Plan.

The RACT notes that Sorell and Brighton Councils have adjunct status under the City Deal.

The RACT believes their role is critical in managing transport and land-use challenges. Their growth, and the decisions their councils make, have a direct impact on Greater Hobart.

The South-East Traffic Solution is a direct response under the Hobart City Deal to the transport pressures created by the growth of the Sorell LGA.

And the Bridgewater Bridge is equally a direct response to growth in the Brighton LGA and in particular to the Brighton industrial hub.

Combined, their populations (18,595 Brighton, 16,230 Sorell as at 2021) are close in total (34,825) to Kingborough (38,618).

In transport terms they are, combined, almost equal to Kingborough in vehicle registrations as at May 2022. Brighton has 21,705 registered vehicles, Sorell 22,052 -- 43,757 combined -- compared with Kingborough's 44,793 vehicles.

Traffic from Sorell and Brighton will continue to have a significant impact on Greater Hobart's congestion, environmental impacts through vehicle emissions, and liveability.

The land-use solutions proposed for Greater Hobart under the draft plan apply equally to both Sorell and Brighton as significant growth areas.

Indeed, Clarence, a Greater Hobart Plan participant, recognises this. It works with Sorell (and the Tasman and Glamorgan Spring Bay Councils) through the South-East Regional Development Association.

The strategic land-use decisions by both Sorell and Brighton will influence the outward spread of development in southern Tasmania.

Transport solutions are also critical to the liveability in Sorell and Brighton by reducing travel times, travel and costs and environmental impacts.

In Brighton particularly, where income and transport challenges are significant, there is a greater need to reduce travel times and costs and to provide cost-efficient access to employment and education.