State Budget 2022–23 submission

December 2021

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

More than 209,000 Tasmanians are RACT members. We are the largest and strongest member organisation in Tasmania.

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.

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

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 Advocacy Committee and RACT Board.

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

Road safety overview.

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 2022-23 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 and to support technology that enhanced its enforcement and deterrence regimes.

The State Government has already enhanced the driver training regime.

This Budget submissions outlines actions that can be funded in 2022-23 and beyond to address the crisis on our roads. Tasmania has the worst road safety record of any Australian state.

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 2022-23 State Budget should fund the following actions to address these road safety challenges:

- 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.
- 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 2022.
- Review road safety education in Tasmanian schools to ensure the programs delivery and content is best practice.

- Renew and extend the state's road safety camera network of fixed and mobile cameras. We note that the Government has committed to an initial rollout of eight new cameras. The RACT urged the Government to commit to 16 new cameras.
- Directly fund the camera network with the fines revenue it generates. In that way only lawbreakers fund the system.
- Establish a new speed-limit-setting regime to ensure a consistent approach across the entire road network, both state and local government.

Infrastructure overview

- Increase the state road maintenance budget from the current $70 million to $100 million. This is a position also taken by the Civil Construction Federation in Tasmania.
- 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.
- 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.
- Make a 10-year program for the Tasman highway an urgent priority, given its importance to the tourism and hospitality sector post-pandemic. The $10 million for upgrades of the highway (under the Greater Eastern Drive upgrades in the 2021-22 Budget addresses some safety issues but a plan for the entire corridor is required, notwithstanding the capacity constraints the Government has acknowledged.
- 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. The RACT notes and supports the recent decision to lower the speed limit on a section of the Tasman Highway near Bicheno following a risk-rating exercise. There are many sections of our highways that require the same investigation and action.

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.

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.
- 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.

Highway 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).

There is a direct correlation between infrastructure standards and road safety.

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 for the next two years, 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.

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