State Budget 2024-25

RACT submission

November 2023

The Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania

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

More than 215,000 Tasmanians are RACT members. We are the largest and strongest member organisation in Tasmania and an award-winning Tasmanian owned insurance company.

Established in 1923, RACT is an apolitical and independent transport infrastructure, road safety and mobility advocate. We increasingly advocate on the impacts of a changing climate and supporting improved community resilience. 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 eight million Australians, and is represented on the board of the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA).

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 Board.

These policies have been informed by history, experience, research, statistical analysis, consultation, industry knowledge and most importantly, through regular engagement with our member community.

Submission to the 2024-25 State Budget

The 2024-25 State Budget is an opportunity to prioritise funding to deliver outcomes that can save lives and reduce serious injuries. It is also an opportunity to improve the liveability of our communities and support adaptation and resilience measures to make our communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

We welcome the opportunity to provide input to the development of the State Budget 2024-25. The past 12 months has been a generally challenging environment for many Tasmanians with socioeconomic pressures such as the costs of living, health and concerns about the environment.

Road safety remains a significant concern for our members, as is mobility and access to affordable transport. The overall liveability of our communities and environmental concerns are of growing importance to our members. It is these three areas that are the focus of RACT's 2024-25 budget submission.

2024-25 State Budget priorities

RACT has six key areas for funding in the 2024-25 State Budget, which are summarised below and detailed in the next section of this submission. We also have several longstanding strategic and ongoing infrastructure and policy priorities which continue to be priorities to our members. These longstanding priorities are located at the end of this submission.

Improving safety on our roads

1. Expand Tasmania's automated traffic enforcement camera network to 32 units and hypothecate speed camera revenue to supporting ongoing raid safety outcomes.
2. Build capability and capacity within the Tasmanian Public Service through appropriate funding, to enable centralised data collection on road trauma across Tasmania's road network, in a nationally consistent way, allowing evidence-based safety investment.
3. Fund AusRAP road rating assessments of Tasmania's highway network to provide a current state overview and prioritise actions to support road safety improvements.
4. Commit $840,000 over three years to fund the expansion of RACT's successful Ready for the Road and Distracted Driving programs to improve outcomes for young Tasmanians, who continue to be overrepresented in the number of deaths on our roads.

A more resilient and prepared community

5. Fund and prioritise the development of a climate peril assessment (bushfire, flood, sea-level rising) at a granular level for Tasmania on a current and future cost basis to inform resilience policy.
6. Fund the work required to identify and develop Tasmania's physical infrastructure projects required to reduce severity of impacts experienced by communities of natural disasters.

About our 2024-25 State Budget priorities

Improving safety on our roads

Improving safety on our roads is a priority for RACT and its members, and the wider Tasmanian community. In the decade from 2011, 321 lives were lost on Tasmania's roads and 2,695 people were seriously injured. For each fatality that's a family torn apart, a community devastated, and for every serious injury that's a life interrupted or changed forever. While the human cost to our community is profound and obvious, the real cost to Tasmania's economy is significant, measured at nearly $500 million a year.[i]

Tasmania is one of the worst performing states when it comes to addressing road trauma, with more than 5.7 deaths per 100,000 population. This year alone, 33 people have died on our roads (to September 2023). While this is 33 too many deaths, it is also above Tasmania's commitment under the National Road Safety Strategy.

Young Tasmanians continue to be overrepresented in the state's road trauma statistics. The 16-25 age group represented more than 21% of all road crashes in Tasmania in 2022, when only representing 10-15% of the licensed driver population. P1 licenced drivers of 17 years of age are four times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision than a driver over the age of 26. Not to mention the economic costs relevant to this age group. For example, it will cost an 18-year-old male with attained brain injuries from a road crash around $12 million in care, support, and medical fees over his lifetime.[ii]

Improving our understanding of the different root causes of road trauma is critical if we are to improve outcomes for Tasmanians. To support this, it is imperative key data that informs decisions, investment and resource allocation is collected in a nationally consistent way, managed and transparently reported.

Improving road safety has many facets. In the 2024-25 State Budget, the following four actions are requested:

1. Expand Tasmania's automated traffic enforcement camera network to 32 units and hypothecate speed camera revenue to supporting ongoing road safety outcomes.

RACT strongly advocates for the expansion of Tasmania's automated enforcement camera network to 32 cameras.

Analysis of crash data shows speed, distraction, and failure to wear a seatbelt account for 62% of death and serious injury (speed 29%, distraction 24%, seatbelt 9%) - elements of unsafe driving that can be detected by the current suite of automated enforcement cameras.

The expansion of the network to 32 cameras would improve coverage to one enforcement camera per 562 kilometres of road, on average. Providing similar per kilometre coverage as South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, jurisdictions which all have lower levels of death and serious injuries on their roads.

The increased number would also deliver greater flexibility in responding to community requests for cameras to be stationed on road sections identified as requiring enforcement and deterrence.

RACT strongly advocates for the hypothecation of revenue from Tasmania's automated enforcement camera network to be invested back into the camera network and other road safety initiatives.

Tasmania is the only state where revenues from safety cameras networks are not hypothecated, or ring-fenced, to be invested in the improvement, expansion and maintenance of the camera network, with remaining funds invested into further road safety initiatives.

RACT's position is to see all revenue from the current suite of automated enforcement cameras hypothecated to fund the network. Like other states, our view is any excess funds would be invested into road safety initiatives (including ongoing data analysis of performance on key metrics of road user behavioural changes).

Importantly, the above approach would result in the confidence in the camera network and address public misconceptions on the network being a "revenue raiser" for government.

RACT data shows 83% of our members surveyed support automated enforcement cameras as a road safety measure, and 95% of members supported fine revenue being invested back into the network.

2. Build capability and capacity within the Tasmanian Public Service through appropriate funding, to enable centralised data collection on road trauma (both death and serious injury) across Tasmania's road network, in a nationally consistent way, allowing evidence-based safety investment.

Every year in Tasmania, an average of 35 people die on our roads, and nearly 300 suffer serious injuries.

But behind every tragic death and serious crash, there is a wealth of data that can help us better understand – and potentially prevent – similar incidents occurring in the future. The true impact of road trauma on individuals and the community extends far beyond the headline statistics of the road toll, and to address this crisis effectively, we need to dig deeper. To make a difference, we need more than good intentions – we need holistic data.

RACT's position is, to fund resourcing within the Tasmanian Public Service to enable the collection and analysis of road trauma and enforcement data across Tasmania's entire road network (not just state controlled roads), which is centrally housed and transparently reported.

The power of this data is the ability to then use it to inform actions and prioritise road safety investments. This data would allow us to pinpoint road safety issues and their root causes, measure the impact of policy changes and replicate successful interventions.

Current efforts to reduce the level of death and serious injury on Tasmania's roads is not meeting the targets set by either the Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy or the National Road Safety Strategy.

Tasmania records a range information for every fatal road crash, including the number of people involved; their behaviour; licence status; the type of crash; and possible causes, however this data is housed across several departments (Tasmania Police, Tasmania Health Service, Department of State Growth, etc.) and not centrally housed or reported.

This data can be even further enhanced with the inclusion of AusRAP data providing information of road safety conditions.

3. Fund AusRAP road rating assessments of the state's highway network to provide a current state overview, and prioritise actions to support road safety improvements.

Under the 2017 National Road Safety Plan, Tasmania committed to undertake an ongoing program of road assessment under the AusRAP road assessment program, to be completed by 2025. All jurisdictions use the same internationally recognised program (AusRAP) to assess the safety of their road network.

We strongly believe 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. We are also asking that dedicated funding is provided to enable the Department of State Growth to undertake this essential benchmark work.

As a priority, we urge the Tasmanian Government to fund and undertake the assessment for state-controlled roads over the coming 12 months. The importance of information gained through these surveys will inform the development of holistic solutions by identifying what and where key risks in the road network are, and help prioritise actions and investments.

An AusRAP survey of Tasmanian roads will provide a baseline understanding of current road safety conditions under the five-star rating framework. In conjunction with a resourced centralised data function, it will greatly support the ability to better understand causes of road crashes, and measure impacts of improvements and actions on our roads.

RACT members want to see substantial safety upgrades on our highways and roads. This is consistent with the RACT policy of having all our state highways be at least 4-star rated.

4. Commit $840,000 over three years to fund the expansion of RACT's successful Ready for the Road and Distracted Driving programs to improve outcomes for young Tasmanians, who continue to be overrepresented in the number of deaths on our roads.

RACT would like to see an increased investment by the Tasmanian Government to improve outcomes for young drivers, by supporting the expansion of the successful RACT Ready for the Road and Distracted Driving programs, by allocating $840,000 to expand the program's reach over a 3-year period.

RACT currently receives state funding to undertake six in-person classroom-based and hands-on programs to students in years 10,11 and 12, annually. This level is not sufficient to support the opportunity to provide in-person education of young drivers as they commence their driving journey.

The RACT Ready for The Road program covers topics such as the process of getting a driver licence, how to choose a safe car, the fatal five and car ownership responsibilities. While the Distracted Driving program, which runs alongside the Ready for Road program, is supported by RACT's professional driver trainers. This hands-on program enables students to navigate a driving course while behind the wheel of our dual controlled training car, simulating real-life distractions such as drink driving, texting while driving, and travelling with passengers.

The programs are currently oversubscribed with many schools on the waiting list. Increasing funding to $280,000 per annum over three years, will enable RACT to provide optimised content and deliver the program to more Tasmanian high school students and other educational facilities such as higher and vocational education institutions that have expressed interest in the program for their students.

A more resilient and prepared community

Our annual member survey undertaken in November showed that longer-term climate related issues are one of the top three concerns for our members. As the impacts of our changing climate continue to be seen both at home and around the world, we are increasingly representing our members' concerns with a focus on developing resilience for our communities. It is essential that Tasmania fund the planning and development of adaptation measures to improve the Tasmania's resilience and response to increasing extreme weather events. RACT is asking the Tasmanian Government to:

5. Fund and prioritise the development of a climate peril assessment (bushfire, flood, sea-level rising) at a granular level for Tasmania on a current and future cost basis to inform resilience policy.

Using the statewide climate change risk assessment as a starting point, the Tasmanian Government must fund, as a priority, a more granular assessment to better inform regional and community actions. More frequent occurrences of extreme weather events are putting Australian homes, communities and livelihoods under pressure, while also increasing the financial risk to governments.

Tasmania's unique environment - topology, vegetation, and weather, are different to other areas of Australia. Understanding the impacts of increasing extreme events in a Tasmanian context at an operational level is essential in both engaging our community and developing and implementing plans to support mitigation and adoption projects and resources, now and into the future.

On the back of the Launceston City Council being aware of its own flood risk, Tasmania led the nation with the development of a flood levee. The $58 million investment into the levy has saved $216 million in losses, and today, collectively saves households millions in insurance premiums annually. The level of understanding should be a standard for all Tasmanian communities, informing local, state and federal partnerships through the Hazards Insurance Partnership and Disaster Ready Fund.

Ensuring appropriate funding to identify and prioritise Tasmania's natural perils at a granular level that support prioritisation and development of physical infrastructure and inform operational priorities for communities, emergency and other services is essential. A Tasmanian based assessment of our key risks is required to support this work.

6. Fund the work required to identify and develop Tasmania's physical infrastructure projects required to reduce severity of impacts experienced by communities of natural disasters.

Ultimately, understanding and investing in mitigation and adaptation projects helps protects Tasmanian households from the effects of extreme weather. It can result in reduced insurance costs lowers the burden on government and taxpayers in providing direct financial assistance. It is an essential part of forward planning.

To understand areas and communities in need of critical climate-resilient infrastructure (such as flood levees, fire mitigation, sea walls, or early warning systems) Tasmania must first invest in understanding who our most at-risk communities are.

Once known, RACT urges the Tasmanian Government to commence investment (with the Commonwealth where needed) to protect communities from the effects of a warming planet and increasingly extreme weather through climate-resilient infrastructure. In addition to specific Tasmanian actions, RACT encourages the Tasmanian Government to:

- 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; and
- Support amendments to national building codes to include a resilience and future risk standard to ensure Tasmania's climatic environment.

Ongoing and longer-term priorities

In addition to the six 2024-25 budget priorities, RACT continues to advocate on several long-standing priorities. They are for the Tasmanian Government to:

Continue the integration of the Safe Systems approach to road safety, which has been adopted by all Australian states and the Commonwealth.

- Establish a new speed-limit-setting regime to ensure a consistent approach across the entire road network (roads managed by both state and local government).
- Review the licensing and regulation of Tasmanian driving schools and instructors to ensure they meet the standards required to operate under the Graduated Licensing System. Adopt the Victorian Safe Systems Assessment Framework to ensure safety is given the highest consideration when designing and constructing roads and highways.
- Newly constructed sections of highway to achieve a safety rating of no less than four stars under the AusRap system.

Invest in road maintenance and road infrastructure:

- Annually review the roads maintenance budget (currently $100 million a year over the next three years) to ensure it fully accounts for the rising costs of fuel, raw materials, and other inflationary impacts.

- Increase funding for road maintenance, so that it is proportional to road project investment, 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.
- Commit funding to continue to implement design solutions to improve road safety, in all projects.

Develop and invest in 10-year plans:

- Complete the 10-year plans for all Tasmanian highways. Commitment of resourcing to develop plans into costed programs of work is a priority.
- Support local government, which is the state's biggest road manager, controlling 14,000 kilometres, compared with the state's 3,700 kilometres. 10-year plans allow forward planning in connecting the local government road network to the state network. The ability for holistic planning in areas particularly where major routes connect and pass through, as safer and efficient roads have a positive economic impact in underpinning commercial and residential growth.

Tasman Highway funding:

- As part of the $100 million allocated to the Tasman Highway in the 2022-23 Federal Budget and the $30 million subsequently allocated by the Tasmanian Government, the delivery of an overarching and costed corridor plan that incorporates an AusRAP survey is a priority. RACT encourages the Tasmanian Government to continue to engage with the East Coast tourism sector to ensure both road safety and visitor amenity outcomes are achieved.

Investing for future mobility

We acknowledge that several elements of the RACT Greater Hobart Mobility Vision have been implemented, including the implementation and recent announcement of the expansion of a Derwent River Ferry Service.

RACT continues to advocate for a holistic, long-term strategy and plan that includes the adjunct councils of Sorrel and Brighton. RACT will be making a formal submission on the current *draft Keeping Hobart Moving Plan*, and *draft River Derwent Ferry Service Masterplan* in early 2024.

Access to affordable fit-for-purpose transport options, including active transport, and the saftest, most affordable Zero-and-Low Emission Vehicles (ZLEVs). ZLEVs are of growing importance to our members. Mobility is an essential component in the liveability of our two largest cities and has a significant impact on productivity outcomes for the state. RACT will also be making a submission to the *draft Emissions Reduction and Resilience Plan – Transport* in late 2023.

[ii] Tasmanian Road Safety Strategy 2007-2016