

Question on Notice

Transport and Resources Committee

Director-General of Transport and Main Roads Briefing to the Transport and Resources Committee - Department of Transport and Main Roads Annual Report 2021-2022

Asked on 27 March 2023

The Transport and Resources Committee asked the Department of Transport and Main Roads -

QUESTION:

1. Queensland's road toll in 2022 was 299 lives lost. This was the highest figure in more than a decade and the highest of all Australian states last year.
 - a. Does the department have any research to indicate what caused the increase in 2022?
 - b. What are the department's main strategies in trying to reduce the number of lives lost on our roads and are they working?

ANSWER:

By way of an update to the Committee, in 2022 there were 297 people killed on Queensland roads, which is 20 more than in 2021 and 44 greater than the previous five-year average (2017 to 2021).

The number of people killed in 2022 was revised from 299 to 297 as a result of recent findings from Queensland Police Service (Forensic Crash Unit) and Coroner's investigations that have been finalised. It should be noted that information held in the RoadCrash database on events occurring within the last 12 months are considered preliminary, to allow for additional investigations and data collection.

The lives lost in 2022 include:

- 188 vehicle drivers and passengers (63 per cent)
- 74 motorcycle and moped riders (25 per cent)
- six bicycle riders (two per cent)
- 29 pedestrians (10 per cent)
- 52 fatalities (18 per cent) involving heavy freight vehicles.

Steady improvements in road and vehicle safety engineering, emergency and medical procedures, along with some of our most impactful road safety interventions, such as the introduction of mandatory seatbelts, roadside breath testing, and speed cameras have all resulted in significant reductions in the number of lives lost on Queensland roads since records began in 1969.

By way of comparison, Queensland had a peak fatality rate of 32 road deaths per 100,000 population in 1973. For the 12-month period 1 March 2022 to 28 February 2023, the fatality rate was 5.29 per 100,000. Queensland's historic low was 4.28 fatalities per 100,000 population in 2019. In recent times we have seen a reduction in the overall rate in lowering the number of lives lost, with a period of plateauing before beginning to rise from 2020.

In recent years all jurisdictions are facing additional challenges, including a growing and ageing population, disruptions from new mobility options and technologies, and complex social issues that are playing out on our roads. Further, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed a notable rise in fatalities. This has been linked with high-risk behaviours that were seen on the network during this time.

An analysis of recent trends shows the Fatal Five behaviours, such as speeding, drink and drug driving, not wearing a seatbelt, and driving while distracted or fatigued are a factor in more than half of all crashes resulting in a death, and concerningly, these behaviours are happening in combination. For example, 45 per cent of fatal crashes involving speeding also involved unrestrained drivers or passengers, and 44 per cent of drink drivers involved in fatal crashes were also speeding.

Queensland is also seeing an upward trend of young drivers (17-20 years of age) and motorcyclists losing their lives on the road and an increase in fatal crashes involving heavy vehicles. In particular, motorcycles were involved in one quarter of all lives lost in 2022. This is a 41 per cent increase compared to the previous five-year average.

Wet weather was also a factor in more crashes in 2022. Rain, or wet, slippery conditions were a factor in 14 per cent of lives lost, and at least 12 lives were lost in flood waters.

While to date, 2023 has seen fewer fatalities than the same point in time in 2022 and is currently under the five-year average for the same period, road trauma is greater than the number of lives lost and includes over 7000 hospitalised casualties each year.

During 1 January to 30 June 2022, there were 3492 hospitalised casualties as a result of crashes within Queensland, which is 470 hospitalised casualties (or 11.9 per cent) fewer than the same period for the previous year and 98 hospitalised casualties (or 2.9 per cent) greater than the previous five-year average for the same period.

Road trauma is a multi-faceted issue, with a range of factors contributing to crash outcomes. In addition to behavioural factors (including but not limited to the fatal five), different cohorts face unique risks, such as frailty and exposure, that may impact their safe road use.

To address the increase in lives lost, the Honourable Mark Bailey MP, Minister for Transport and Main Roads, convened a Road Safety Roundtable in January this year.

The Roundtable brought together more than 40 transport experts, stakeholders, and industry leaders to explore options to improve road safety. Education, driver behaviour, enforcement and infrastructure were key topics discussed and will all continue to form part of the plan to make Queensland roads safer.

The ideas put forward during the roundtable have been investigated to determine their potential road safety benefit and viability for implementation. An announcement about new and enhanced initiatives that will be progressed following the roundtable will be made shortly.

The new initiatives will complement our existing efforts to combat road trauma. Last year saw the release of the *Queensland Road Safety Strategy 2022-2031* (the Strategy); accompanying *Queensland Road Safety Action Plan 2022-2024*; and *Queensland Road Safety Research and Evaluation Framework*.

The Strategy sets the direction into the second decade of action on road safety and reaffirms our commitment to a vision of zero serious road trauma in Queensland by 2050. Ambitious ten-year targets have been set in alignment with the *National Road Safety Strategy 2021–30*, to reduce lives lost by 50 per cent and serious injuries by 30 per cent by 2031.

Retaining the internationally recognised Safe System, the Strategy takes an enhanced, more integrated approach to road safety that seeks to better understand the broader health, social and cultural factors that contribute to road trauma. It also shifts focus towards localised solutions to enable support for more targeted, grassroots initiatives that will help drive the cultural shift we need to see across Queensland.

The first action plan under the Strategy identifies 20 practical actions to improve road safety outcomes now and sets the foundation for future initiatives.

We have already delivered several actions, including:

- tougher penalties for high-risk driving offences such as speeding, running red lights, and not wearing a seatbelt
- Move Over and Slow Down laws
- new rules to improve Personal Mobility Device safety
- commencing a pilot of Rural Intersection Activated Warning Signs at high-risk rural locations
- rolling out speed cameras in road work zones and school zones.

Over the next 12 months we will be prioritising:

- implementing the Ride to Zero motorcycle safety program
- trialling Phone Awareness Monitor technology

- a significant review of our approach to tackling drug driving
- developing child restraint guidance for parents and carers
- expanding our mobile phone and seatbelt cameras in regional Queensland
- introducing new point to point cameras and redlight speed cameras, as well as additional sites for Hold the Red technology
- reviewing the eligibility requirements to progress through the heavy vehicle licensing system, and
- new initiatives following the Road Safety Roundtable.

These initiatives build on significant investment made under our previous strategy including the roll out of mobile phone and seatbelt cameras; PrepL; improved Hazard Perception Testing; on-going delivery of the Community Road Safety Grants and StreetSmarts campaigns; significant reforms to the Drink Driving program and over \$1.71 billion in infrastructure improvements through the Targeted Road Safety Program. The Strategy and its subsidiary actions to improve road safety are supported by an evaluation framework. This evaluation process ensures the continuous improvement of current road safety interventions, and the direction of focus for emerging interventions. It measures what we're doing and the impact it is making on road safety in Queensland.

Recognising the effectiveness of our most impactful road safety interventions in reducing road trauma over time, we will continue to deliver important, evidence-based interventions to help drive the cultural shift we need to see across Queensland. The impact of these initiatives will take some time to translate into outcomes on the network and will take time for the community to understand and begin to shift their attitudes and behaviour.