
Appendix one – Response from Transport for NSW

Transport for NSW



Ms Margaret Crawford
Auditor General
Audit Office of NSW
GPO Box 12
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Re: Performance Audit Report into Regional Road Safety

OTS23/04184

Dear Ms Crawford

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Performance Audit Report (the Report) into Regional Road Safety. Transport for NSW (TfNSW) welcomes your Office's recognition of the criticality of our work to reduce road trauma in NSW and accepts the recommendations of the audit, consistent with our commitment to continually enhance our policy settings and strategies to achieve this important outcome. Notwithstanding this, TfNSW also wishes to highlight that a number of the findings are inconsistent with the evidence TfNSW provided to the Audit Office and which is otherwise reflected in the body of the Report.

TfNSW is committed to reducing road trauma in our regional communities through the delivery of the multi-dimensional 2026 Road Safety Action Plan (the Plan). Our wide-ranging initiatives based on the internationally recognised Safe System approach include policy and legislative reforms, safer road infrastructure, safer vehicles, evaluation of data, research and evidence, while building a stronger commitment to safety through enhanced education, engagement and local programs to reduce unsafe behaviour in regional areas.

The NSW Government has set ambitious targets to reduce fatalities from crashes on our roads by 50% by 2030 and serious injuries by 30%. These state-wide targets apply to regional NSW noting that to achieve these targets we need to reduce road trauma across NSW. The setting of state-wide road safety targets is consistent with other jurisdictions and international best practice. Importantly, delivery of road safety countermeasures is tailored and applied with a focus on road user groups across all geographic locations to maximise trauma reductions. The NSW Government tables to NSW Parliament annual progress reports on road trauma outcomes which also outline expenditure of the Community Road Safety Fund, including the investment in regional NSW.

TfNSW acknowledges the merit of the Report's recommendation to publish an additional document specifically to provide insights into the Plan's measures to improve regional road safety. However, TfNSW remains committed to the current statewide trauma reduction target approach to ensure road safety strategies reflect the jurisdictional accountability for management of safety systems at the National, State or Local government level. Not only is this best practice internationally, but NSW's trauma reduction targets align with National Road Safety Strategy targets, and this alignment supports NSW to achieve its targets.

Transport for NSW

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TfNSW wishes to correct the Report's reference to TfNSW advising the Audit Office that regional trauma reduction targets are not needed as the road safety countermeasures are the same for all areas of NSW. Rather, TfNSW advised during the audit that the existing approach of state-wide targets aligns with the approach adopted by other jurisdictions and is internationally recognised as best practice, the aim is to achieve a 50% reduction in fatalities in both regional and metropolitan areas. TfNSW also advised the delivery of road safety countermeasures are, as outlined above, tailored and applied with a focus on road user groups across all geographic locations to maximise trauma reductions.

Lastly, TfNSW respectfully suggests the Report does not sufficiently consider independent road trauma modelling provided to the Audit Office. The modelling demonstrates the positive impact of previous and existing road safety strategies and is based on thorough evaluations demonstrating reductions in trauma from road crashes. For example, the modelling shows that over the past decade the improvement in vehicle safety features in cars prevented 700 deaths in NSW. Better crash protection in cars as well as the new crash avoidance technologies like automatic emergency braking and lane assist systems are making a difference as demonstrated in the modelling.

TfNSW acknowledges the Report's finding of an underspend of the Community Road Safety Fund as a result of the impact of unprecedented events including COVID-19 pandemic and recent natural disasters. A plan for mitigating these types of impacts in the future, where possible, will be developed.

TfNSW is committed to reviewing the Local Government Road Safety Program to ensure every council has access to a Road Safety Officer to better resource their road safety planning and integration in their local communities.

I enclose a more detailed response to the Report's recommendations and the actions we will be taking to implement them over the next 12 months.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Murray".

Josh Murray
Secretary
Transport for NSW

24 November 2023

By November 2024, Transport for NSW should:

1. Develop a regional implementation plan to support the NSW Road Safety Action Plan 2022–2026, including an integrated and systematic accountability framework to measure, analyse and publicly report annually on:
 - a) road safety trends and insights on a sub-regional level
 - b) specific countermeasures that are tailored to the road safety needs of regional communities and to particular sub-regional ‘hotspots’
 - c) the impact of countermeasures against road trauma reduction targets specific to regional New South Wales
 - d) funding that is allocated to achieving road safety outcomes at a sub-regional level.

Response:

Transport for NSW accepts this recommendation. TfNSW will commence work to determine its definitions of sub-regional and hotspots as referred to by the Audit Office and review its allocation of resources.

2. Develop and implement a plan to measure and mitigate the known and emerging risks causing underspends in the Community Road Safety Fund.

Response:

Transport for NSW accepts this recommendation. As noted in the report from the establishment of the Community Road Safety Fund in 2013, all funding was substantially spent each year up until the unprecedented impacts of COVID and the following natural disasters impacted the delivery of programs in particular the infrastructure projects. TfNSW will design and implement a plan to monitor and measure potential underspends from known and emerging risks and to the extent possible mitigate the risk of potential for underspends, noting that being a statutory fund, the funding is still used for road safety projects in future years.

3. Expedite the review of the Local Government Road Safety Program and make recommendations to government aimed at increasing the uptake of the Program by councils in regional New South Wales.

Response:

Transport for NSW accepts this recommendation. This is an existing action in the Road Safety Action Plan and will be initiated so the review is completed by November 2024.

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