ARSF Road Safety Report on Work-Related Road Safety

December 2025

White Paper

Executive Summary

Australian governments at all levels have acknowledged the goal to improve road safety outcomes.

The National Road Safety Strategy represents all governments' commitment to deliver significant reductions in road trauma, putting Australia on a path to achieve 'Vision Zero' or zero deaths and reduce serious injuries on our roads by 2050. https://www.roadsafety.gov.au/nrss

One of the key priority areas listed in the Strategy is Work-Related Road Safety.

Work-related road safety is a critical but often, under recognised issue, with motor vehicle incidents contributing to a significant proportion of workplace fatalities and injuries.

To coincide with this priority focus, The Australian Road Safety Foundation (ARSF) convened a series of roundtable discussions across various cities in Australia. The focus of these roundtables was to investigate the scope of work-related road fatalities and injuries, understand the current actions being undertaken from a range of stakeholders to manage this critical risk, and to explore what can be done to reduce road trauma for anyone driving or using the road for work purposes.

These discussions, attended by over 140 participants, were instrumental in sharing insights, identifying gaps and developing strategies for reducing work-related road trauma. Key focuses included managing road safety risks, enhancing workplace safety, and improving the road safety culture in organisations.

Key Points for Consideration

The ARSF's roundtable discussions underscored the importance of a holistic approach to road safety, focusing on raising awareness, developing robust strategies, improving data accessibility, and leveraging technology to enhance road safety.

The key areas identified for improvement include:

- Educating workplaces about driving being their number 1 safety risk
- Elevating awareness in corporate communities about the responsibility for work-related road safety.
- Encouraging greater action and enforcement from Safe Work authorities
- Addressing gaps in accessible data and incident reporting.
- Establishing national frameworks to guide organisations of varying capabilities.
- Utilising safety technologies and incentivising safe driving behaviours.

While driving is recognised as one of the most hazardous tasks in the workplace, many organisations fail to apply the same level of diligence in mitigating this critical risk as they would to other workplace safety risks.

Work-related road crashes account for a significant portion of occupational fatalities, and emerging trends point to increasing incidents among gig economy workers and vulnerable road users as well as traditional work-related driving operations such as trades people, sales representatives and delivery drivers etc.

It must also be noted that the general road environment itself is becoming a more dangerous place, with increasing trends in aggression, rule breaking and declining attitudes. The national road fatality rates have also experienced annual increases over the past four consecutive years.

The number of road crashes are showing increasing trends. According to the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics 2022, Social cost of Road Crashes Report, there were an estimated 965,700 annual road crashes between 2016 and 2020 involving approximately 1.7 million vehicles, an increase of 48 percent compared with the estimated 653,900 crashes involving approximately 1.2 million vehicles in 2006. https://www.bitre.gov.au https://www.bitre.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/social-cost-of-road-crashes.pdf

The ARSF strongly believes that improving outcomes in the area of work-related road safety could deliver significant improvements in reducing road trauma in the short, medium and longer term.

It will require a higher level of collaboration across government and industry sectors and a stronger focus from agencies such as Worksafe Australia and the State and Territory agencies. It will also require greater collaboration with industry to elevate this issue to all workplaces around the country.

Why Hold These Roundtables

Road trauma remains the leading cause of workplace fatalities and injuries in Australia, with vehicle-related incidents representing the highest single category of occupational deaths and serious injuries. Despite advances in vehicle technology, regulatory oversight, and public education, human factors, including fatigue, distraction, cognitive overload, and behavioural risk-taking remain under-addressed.

The ARSF, through a series of national roundtables and industry consultations conducted across Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, and Townsville during 2024–2025, has gathered insights from over 140 participants, including government agencies, regulators, industry leaders, fleet operators, insurers, and advocacy groups.

Key findings include:

- Fleet and work-related vehicle incidents are **Australia's number one workplace risk**.
- **Current corporate and national systems** often fail to address the majority of human factors associated with crashes.
- **Fragmented data collection** limits understanding of near-misses, minor incidents, and high-risk behaviours.

- **National leadership, policy consistency, and coordinated governance** are urgently required.

This submission outlines the ARSF's evidence-based recommendations for a National Fleet Safety Framework, including governance, standards, training, data systems, and public awareness campaigns.

This report provides an in-depth summary of roundtable discussions and outlines the challenges and opportunities for improving road safety within work-related driving contexts. It presents a practical roadmap to reduce vehicle-related workplace trauma, improve organisational road safety culture, and protect all road users.

1.Overview of Work-Related Road Trauma

Magnitude of the Issue

Work-related road trauma is the leading cause of work-related deaths and injuries. According to Safe Work Australia (2012), motor vehicle incidents accounted for two-thirds of all workplace fatalities over the past seven years.

The most recent data from Safe Work Australia (2025) confirms this remains the case today, with vehicle incidents continuing to be the leading cause of work fatalities and injury.

Vehicle incidents continue to account for the largest proportion of fatal injuries (42% or 79 fatalities). https://data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/insights/key-whs-statistics-australia/latest-release

In exploring this issue, there are a number of facts to consider. These include:

- Research conducted by Monash University Accident Research Unit in 2005, reported that fleet vehicles had a higher crash rate per 10,000 registered vehicles per year than non-fleet vehicles;
- Workplace Health and Safety Act states that a vehicle is classed as a workplace;
- Employers have legal obligations under 'duty of care' and need to be aware that work vehicles are as much a part of the workplace as the factory floor, office or workshop;
- Likewise, employees also need to take responsibility for their own safety as well as the safety of other road users;
- Under the "Chain of Responsibility" legislation, employers must demonstrate that anyone driving a company vehicle is adequately trained and that all reasonably practical steps have been taken to reduce risk;
- It has been estimated that the hidden costs of a crash involving a work vehicle may be between 8-36 times that of the vehicle repair cost (Murray et al., 2002);
- Legal requirements governing work-related driving mean that employers must demonstrate the same structured approach and commitment to this issue as they would to any other area of workplace health and safety.

Work Health and Safety (WHS) and Vehicles

Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws in Australia are largely harmonised across jurisdictions, and similar principles also apply in New Zealand. While there are some local variations, the general requirement is that a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking **(PCBU)**s remains largely consistent across jurisdictions.

In this context, PCBUs have a duty to manage the risks associated with the use of vehicles, both on public roads and on private property. A PCBU may be an individual (such as a sole operator) or an organisation (such as a company or government agency).

- **PCBUs** must manage road traffic safety risks whenever workers travel on the road, regardless of who owns or operates the vehicle. This includes eliminating risks to health and safety, or if that is not reasonably practicable, minimising them as far as reasonably practicable.
- **Officers** (such as company directors and senior managers) must exercise due diligence to ensure their organisation complies with WHS laws. This means they must make sure the business or undertaking has the appropriate resources, systems, and processes in place to eliminate or minimise road traffic safety risks.
- **Workers** have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and that of others. They must also follow any reasonable instructions, policies, and procedures provided by the organisation.

Vehicles as Workplaces

These WHS duties apply to vehicles:

- no matter how far they travel from the workplace;
- whether they are owned by the business, a worker, or a third party;
- in addition to obligations under road traffic and transport laws.

Safety on the road is influenced not only by individual driver behaviour but, more importantly, by the systems and controls an organisation puts in place to eliminate or reduce risk.

A Systematic Approach to Managing Road Safety Risks

Fulfilling WHS duties requires a structured risk management approach. This involves:

1. **Identifying hazards** – recognising the sources of risk in your transport and vehicle operations.
2. **Assessing risks** – where necessary, considering the likelihood and potential consequences of incidents.
3. **Controlling risks** – implementing effective measures such as procurement standards, driver training, vehicle maintenance, and safety procedures.
4. **Reviewing controls** – regularly checking that risk controls remain effective, relevant, and up-to-date.

5. Vehicles-as-a-workplace-national-guide PDF (www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

Industry Perspective

Industry experts have long criticised the insufficient attention given to road safety, despite its critical importance.

As Murray et al. (2003) pointed out, there exists a "scandal of tolerance" regarding work-related road safety. Murray,W.,Newman,S.,Watson,B., Davey, J.and Schonfeld, C. (2002). Evaluating and improving fleet safety in Australia, ATSB report. While there are growing discussions about this issue, practical efforts to address it have often been fragmented and insufficient.

Under work health and safety laws, persons conducting a business or undertaking are required to ensure the health and safety of workers and third parties so far as is reasonably practicable, including risks associated with using vehicles for work.

Whilst some organisations are demonstrating industry leadership and taking proactive steps to address road safety, many others are either ignoring the issue or are totally unaware to the risks and their responsibilities.

Unfortunately, even though driving a vehicle is potentially one of the most dangerous activities within a workplace, many organisation's risk management practices do not extend the same level of diligence as they would for other risky workplace activities.

It could also be argued that many of the current countermeasures do not fully address the issue from a holistic standpoint.

Despite legislative requirements clearly outlining obligations associated with work vehicle use and risk management, many organisations fail to adequately address risks associated with work related driving.

2. Fleet Drivers and the Extent of Risk Exposure

Fleet Vehicles and Road Usage

Regardless of the nature of their business, many organisations have identified road crashes as the single greatest risk in their day-to-day operations.

Around 20% of all kilometres travelled by passenger vehicles is for business purposes, excluding travel to and from work. Around one quarter of all fatal road crashes involve a vehicle being used for business, the majority of these involving a car or light truck.

https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/20987/vehicles-as-workplace-rural-workers.pdf

Light commercial vehicles, including utilities and goods carrying vans, travelled a total of 52,229 million kilometres. (12 Months ended 30 June 2020)

In that same period, articulated trucks travelled 78.3 thousand kilometres on average, this was more than any other vehicle type. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/tourism-and-transport/survey-motor-vehicle-use-australia/latest-release

Given that company drivers travel far more than private car drivers, they face heightened risks, both in terms of incident frequency and severity.

The more someone drives, the greater their risk of driving-related injury or death. Zurich (2011) has identified that the associated death risk for driving 40,000 km per year is 1 in 8,000 people.

By comparison, this is similar to mining or quarrying (1 in 7,500 people) but much greater than construction (1 in 10,000 people). https://www.ntc.gov.au/sites/default/files/assets/files/National-Road-Safety-Partnership-Program-Strategy-2013.pdf

Workplace Road Crashes

Work-related road crashes account for approximately 50% of occupational fatalities and 15% of national road deaths, indicating the scale of the problem.

Furthermore, company drivers are involved in about 50% more incidents than private car drivers (Australian Transport Council, 2011). These statistics reflect the ongoing need for more focused road safety measures in organisations with fleets.https://www.ntc.gov.au/sites/default/files/assets/files/Discussion-Paper-Corporate-approach-to-transport-safety-2011.pdf

At least one vehicle was directly involved in the incident in 66% (124) of worker fatalities in 2024.

There are significantly more worker fatalities resulting from single vehicle incidents than multiple vehicle incidents, with 72% of vehicle-involved worker fatalities stemming from single vehicle incidents.

The age group with the highest proportion of fatalities involving at least one vehicle in 2024 was Under 25 with 83%.

Of the fatalities involving a vehicle, 50% (62) involved at least one truck in 2024. While the age group with the lowest proportion was 25-34 with 56%.
https://data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/insights/key-whs-statistics-australia/latest-release

3.Collaborative Efforts for Improved Road Safety

Round Table Discussions and Collective Action

The ARSF convened roundtable discussions across various cities in Australia to address rising work-related road fatalities.

These discussions, attended by over 140 participants, were instrumental in sharing insights and developing strategies for reducing road trauma. The participants ranged from a wide scope of organisations and industries. They included large corporate companies undertaking significant steps to manage and reduce risks, through to smaller organisations at the start of their journey in this area.

The aim was to source a wide cross section of industries to explore the current countermeasures and explore what “best practice” could look like.

Key focuses included managing road safety risks, enhancing workplace safety, and improving the road safety culture in organisations.

Key Points for Consideration

The ARSF's roundtable discussions underscored the importance of a holistic approach to road safety, focusing on raising awareness, developing robust strategies, improving data accessibility, and leveraging technology to enhance road safety.

The key areas identified for improvement include:

- Elevating awareness in corporate communities about the responsibility for work-related road safety;
- Addressing gaps in accessible data and incident reporting;
- Establishing national frameworks to guide organisations of varying capabilities and scale;
- Utilising safety technologies and incentivising safe driving behaviours;
- Increasing enforcement of current workplace safety legislation.

4.Creating a Road Safety Culture in the Workplace

Shifting Perceptions and Language

One of the primary challenges in improving work-related road safety is changing the narrative around road safety in the workplace.

Many organisations limit their focus to truck drivers or delivery personnel, often overlooking the risks faced by occasional drivers or sales staff, managers and driving operations.

The reality is that a vehicle is classed as a workplace and therefore, any person driving for work purposes is exposed to risk on the road.

To foster a safer culture, the language used in corporate communications must broaden to emphasize that road safety is a workplace issue for all employees, not just those on the road full-time.

Engagement and Behavioural Change

Improving road safety culture requires ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and the adoption of new processes. This can be achieved through:

- Forums and discussions with stakeholders across industries;
- Sharing best practices and learning from other sectors;
- Introducing programs that encourage employees to report unsafe behaviours or conditions;
- Fostering a culture where safety measures are continuously reinforced, both in the workplace and at home.

It also requires consistent major campaigns to elevate overall awareness as well as enforcing current workplace safety laws that are already in place.

Addressing Fatigue and Unsafe Driving

Unsafe driving is a challenging issue. Part of the challenge lays in the fragmented public view of what safe driving and correct road use actually means. This is further complicated by an individuals view of their own capabilities and operating standards.

It could be argued that the majority of people are only ever given a rudimentary grounding in the road laws and vehicle operations. Whilst a person may demonstrate enough knowledge to obtain a licence, it doesn't automatically translate into a high level of operational skill or situational awareness.

It's possible to operate a vehicle within the structure of the road rules, but still demonstrate unsafe habits or behaviours.

An organisation's general culture also has a strong influence on driving and road user behaviour. If road safety is not seen as something important, a default culture of unsafe driving can easily be cultivated within the organisation.

In addition to these cultural aspects, it would also appear that road user standards generally have reduced in the post-Covid period.

Evidence supporting this social behavioural change is largely anecdotal at this point. However, there are some research studies underway that are exploring the scope of this change in social attitude.

This social change on the road has significant implications for people driving for work. They are operating their workplace (the vehicle) in an apparently increasingly hostile environment.

Fatigue is a critical risk factor, particularly in small businesses and sole traders, where it is often more of a concern than alcohol-related incidents.

Policies and training programs should emphasise fatigue management and encourage employers to consider alternative transportation options when fatigue is detected.

5. Corporate Leadership and Road Safety

Leadership Involvement

It was clear in the discussions that leadership from the corporate level was essential.

To drive meaningful change in road safety, corporate leadership must actively engage in road safety practices. This involves acknowledging work-related road trauma as a top risk to worker safety and ensuring that a company's board and senior management are involved in both internal philosophies and policy development.

Safety programs should be treated as a "must-do" rather than a "nice-to-do." This includes training, procedures and internal safety campaigns.

Strategic Oversight and Accountability

Leadership must also take responsibility for fostering a safety culture, monitoring performance data, and ensuring that road safety measures are consistently applied across all levels of the organisation.

This includes using data to identify risks, assessing vehicle safety features, and investing in regular safety training and performance monitoring.

This leadership must also drive the organisation's overall philosophy on work related road safety. This leadership commitment is vital to ensuring an ongoing focus on road use and vehicle safety, not just within the organisation but to the broader community as well.

6. Data Collection and Near-Miss Reporting

Gaps in Data Collection

A significant challenge in improving work-related road safety is the lack of comprehensive data on near-miss incidents and injuries.

Current data systems do not always distinguish between work and non-work-related injuries, making it difficult to identify trends or address specific risks.

There is a pressing need for improved data collection, particularly regarding near-misses and fatalities occurring while commuting.

A persistent and under-recognised issue identified through the ARSF's national roundtables is the cultural resistance to reporting near-miss incidents. Across industries, near-miss data remains one of the most valuable yet least-utilised sources of insight for preventing crashes and serious injuries.

Current Culture and Barriers

In many organisations, especially those managing large or decentralised fleets, near-misses are either not reported at all or are captured inconsistently. Several cultural and organisational factors contribute to this gap:

- Fear of blame or repercussion: Drivers often associate near-miss reporting with punishment or disciplinary action;
- Low perceived importance: Many employees see a near-miss as "nothing happened," rather than recognising it as an opportunity for learning;
- Time and process barriers: Reporting systems are cumbersome or poorly integrated into daily workflows, discouraging prompt entry;
- Managerial inconsistency: Supervisors may not model the desired behaviour by encouraging, analysing, or acting on reported data;
- Lack of feedback loops: When reports are submitted but no visible change follows, engagement declines, and apathy develops.

The result is a significant data blind spot. While fleets and workplaces may capture formal incidents, they often miss the hundreds of early warning signs that precede them. Without this visibility, organisations cannot identify emerging risks, systemic weaknesses, or behavioural patterns that lead to harm.

Why Near-Miss Data Matters

Evidence from aviation, mining, and healthcare demonstrates that proactive reporting of near-misses directly correlates with reductions in serious incidents. In road safety, every collision is typically preceded by multiple unsafe events - harsh braking, lane departures, or unobserved hazards which, if captured and analysed, could drive targeted interventions.

Near-miss data allows organisations to:

- Predict risk before it escalates to a crash;
- Diagnose behavioural and environmental contributors (fatigue, distraction, workload, weather, etc.);
- Identify systemic or design issues in vehicles, routes, or scheduling;
- Build trust and shared accountability by focusing on learning rather than blame;
- Benchmark performance and measure improvement in safety culture over time.

When near-miss reporting becomes an expected, non-punitive part of normal operations, it strengthens psychological safety and helps create a learning culture rather than a compliance culture. Embedding near-miss culture into national fleet and driver safety policy would represent a transformative shift from reacting to crashes, to preventing them.

It would also normalise safety dialogue across workplaces, improve transparency, and drive accountability through evidence-based learning.

Leveraging Data for Safety Improvement

Access to real-time data and incident reports can drive safer practices. Organisations must implement more robust incident reporting and analysis systems that not only track crashes but also capture near-miss incidents.

Such data from telematics or other data collection platforms can inform risk assessments and support targeted interventions to reduce incidents.

7. The Role of Vehicles and Technology in Enhancing Road Safety

Modern vehicle safety technology plays a critical role in shaping and managing safety expectations within workplace driving environments. As organisations place greater emphasis on risk management and duty of care, 5-star ANCAP vehicles with advanced safety systems such as lane-keeping assist, automatic emergency braking, fatigue detection, GPS telematics, and speed-limiting tools provide both a protective layer for drivers and a measurable way for employers to uphold safety standards and reduce incidents.

Thes reductions can in be in both incident likelihood and severity.

These technologies act as real-time safeguards, reducing the likelihood of collisions and helping drivers maintain safe behaviour.

While the majority of light passenger vehicles are equipped with a high level of safety features, the reality is that many commercial vehicles don't come with the same level of safety or driver aids.

Things like advanced driver-assist systems, fatigue alerts, and collision-avoidance technology are still far less common in work utes, vans, and trucks. For small businesses, getting into a 5-star ANCAP vehicle can feel out of reach financially, even though we know those top-rated vehicles make a massive difference in reducing harm.

Sole traders, especially in trades, face unique challenges too.

It's common to add lift kits, canopies, suspension upgrades, roof racks, or tow bars to make the vehicle fit the work requirements. But these modifications can unintentionally change the vehicle's handling, braking performance, and even its crash safety rating. Most people are not informed of this when they buy the vehicle. Manufacturers and dealers could play a much stronger role in educating customers about how road safety features work and how modifications might affect them.

Another area that's often overlooked is trailer use and load management. There's still a big knowledge gap around things like Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM), towing capacities, and how load weights affect stability and braking.

Many incidents come down to simple misunderstandings like assuming a trailer can take "whatever fits" and not realising how much maintenance and regular inspections matter to keeping both the vehicle and the load safe.

Finally, when it comes to procurement, safety isn't always front and centre. Businesses often choose vehicles based on cost, familiarity, or what they've "always bought," rather than comparing the actual safety features available.

With the technology now on the market, there's a real opportunity for organisations to rethink how they select plant and vehicles, and to prioritise not just performance or price, but the safety of the people using them every day.

Features like telematics and driver-monitoring systems provide accurate data on speed, harsh braking, distraction, and route compliance, helping employers identify trends, reinforce expectations, and tailor training to the actual risks employees face on the road.

Advancements in Technology

Technology is a key enabler of safer driving in the workplace. Fleet operators are increasingly adopting AI-powered monitoring systems to track behaviours such as fatigue, distraction, and seatbelt use.

Cameras and telematics help to monitor driving patterns, providing valuable insights for coaching and improving driver performance. However, the adoption of such technologies in light vehicle fleets is still limited, and there are concerns about cost, privacy and the application of these technologies to different types of vehicles.

There are new App based systems that address some of these issues and provide good user performance insights without the need to hardwire a telematics system into the vehicle/

Potential of Data Analytics

Data analytics offers great potential for customizing training programs and tracking vehicle performance. Fleet operators can use telematics to measure critical metrics like braking

patterns, acceleration, and incident frequency, offering a clearer picture of what "good" driving looks like.

This information can be used for targeted driver coaching and to establish performance benchmarks across the fleet.

8. Education and Training in Road Safety

Driver Training

Driver training needs to move beyond the traditional “tick-the-box” approach that many organisations still rely on.

Accredited courses and classic defensive driving sessions have their place, but they often focus on basic skills or controlled scenarios that don’t reflect the real risks workers face on the road. Modern workplaces need training that goes deeper. Training that actually changes behaviour, supports smarter decision-making, and equips drivers to use the technology built into today’s vehicles.

A more effective approach starts with a strong induction process that helps drivers understand the specific safety systems in their work vehicles.

Features like lane-keeping assist, automatic emergency braking, stability control, and trailer safety systems only improve safety when drivers know how they work, when they activate, and what their limitations are. Training is also required around towing and vehicle mass (GVM) especially with a fleet of vans or utes.

Training must give drivers the understanding and confidence to use these systems properly, not ignore them or override them out of habit.

Beyond technology, driver development also needs to focus on higher-order skills, for example hazard perception, risk assessment, situational awareness, and managing cognitive load while driving.

These are the abilities that actually prevent incidents long before a collision-avoidance system kicks in. When training encourages drivers to think, anticipate, and make better decisions under pressure, it creates safer outcomes across the fleet.

By shifting from compliance-based training to capability-based learning, organisations can build drivers who aren’t just licensed, they’re genuinely prepared for the complexities of modern road environments.

Continuous Training, Education and Professional Development

Ongoing education and training are critical to ensuring that road safety becomes embedded in workplace culture. Many organisations make the mistake of offering driver training only during onboarding, neglecting to provide refresher courses or behaviour-based training over time.

As driving safety is influenced by a variety of factors, including external road conditions and vehicle technology, training should be dynamic and continuous.

Behavioural Focus in Training

Rather than focusing solely on technical driving skills, training should emphasise behavioural change, helping employees understand why safe driving practices are critical. Upper management should also prioritise regular training sessions to reinforce road safety awareness across the workforce.

9. Compliance, Procedures, and Legislation

Ensuring Compliance

Compliance with road safety regulations must be viewed as integral to daily operations, rather than as a box to tick.

This involves ensuring that all employees are familiar with and adhere to company policies, including vehicle inspections and maintenance schedules. Regular audits should be conducted to ensure compliance with safety protocols, and new employees should undergo thorough induction programs covering road safety practices.

Strong fleet operational policies create the structure that is the basis of improving work-related road safety performance.

These policies set expectations for vehicle use, maintenance, load limits, fatigue management, mobile phone use, and incident reporting.

Without clear guidelines, each driver ends up relying on their own judgment, which leads to inconsistency and risk. A solid policy makes sure every worker understands how vehicles should be operated, what the safety requirements are, and what support is available to manage risks.

Another aspect that often falls into the assumed area is holding a valid drivers licence. Licence checks are often overlooked with companies sometimes assuming that a person holds a valid and current licence.

Licences can expire, be suspended, or have conditions added and employers may not be informed about it unless they have a formal process in place.

Regular licence verification helps ensure that every driver on the road is legally allowed to be there, protects the business from liability, and shows employees that safe, compliant driving is a shared responsibility.

National Framework for Policy and Best Practices

There is a need for a national framework to standardise road safety practices across organisations of varying sizes. This would include guidance on vehicle procurement, driver selection, safety features, and vehicle inspections.

Government agencies and industry bodies should collaborate to provide resources, training, and policy advice to help businesses implement effective road safety measures.

These areas also need to be supported by strong enforcement from safety authorities and regulators such as WorkSafe Australia and the State and Territory agencies.

Currently, it appears that there remains a low level of action from these authorities when it comes to promoting work related road safety and prosecuting organisations for breaches, incidents and serious crashes.

10. Addressing Vulnerable Road Users

Risks to Vulnerable Road Users

Vulnerable road users, including motorcyclists, gig economy workers, and pedestrians, face heightened risks on the road. With the rise of gig economy jobs, such as food delivery services, anecdotally there has been a significant increase in the number of unregistered and inadequately trained road users. The individuals are often operating in high-risk environments with limited safety measures or oversight.

Improving Safety for Vulnerable Road Users

It is essential for businesses to include the safety of vulnerable road users in their road safety strategies. This includes offering specialised training for workers using motorcycles, bicycles, and mopeds, as well as ensuring that safety equipment is available and used.

Action Steps to Address Work-Related Road Safety Issues

To strengthen road safety in the workplace, it's important to move from identifying the issues to taking practical, targeted steps that reduce risk.

The insights gained from the roundtables highlight several gaps that commonly occur in workplace driving environments from limited safety technology in commercial vehicles, to unclear responsibilities around vehicle modifications, load management, licensing, fleet oversight, policy and leadership commitment.

Addressing these gaps doesn't require a complete overhaul, but it does call for a more structured and proactive approach to work-related road safety and vehicle operations. To effectively tackle work-related road safety concerns and mitigate road trauma, a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach is required.

By implementing the following recommended actions, organisations can create a safer, more consistent framework for anyone operating vehicles or towing equipment for work. These steps are designed to improve compliance, enhance driver awareness, and ensure that vehicles in the fleet meet the standards needed to protect workers and other road users.

These action steps outline key initiatives for organisations, government bodies, and other stakeholders to improve road safety across all work-related driving contexts.

1. **Strengthen Compliance and Legislation**

Action Steps:

I. Ensure Regulatory Compliance: Regularly audit compliance with relevant road safety regulations, such as vehicle inspections, driver licensing, and road safety standards.
II. Ensure employees adhere to safety protocols both on and off the job.

III. Encourage a review from agencies such as Worksafe Australia and the State and Territory agencies to place greater focus on work related driving. This review should look at enforcement of current workplace safety legislation and incident investigation.
IV. Advocate for National Standards: Work with industry bodies and government organisations to establish national road safety standards for work-related driving that all businesses, regardless of size, can follow.
V. Provide Legal Incentives for Safe Practices: Encourage government and regulatory bodies to introduce tax incentives or subsidies for businesses investing in road safety programs, technologies, and training.
VI. Investigate Incidents and Prosecute Breaches/Non-Compliance: Safe work Regulators and authorities must investigate serious road incidents with the rigor as other work incidents that resulted in death or serious injury.

2. Strengthen Leadership Commitment

Action Steps:

I. Establish an overarching governance body to focus solely on work-related road safety: This agency should be a national body but would collaborate with state governments and the business community.
II. Establish a work-related road safety advisory board: This industry group would assist government and regulators to shape policy and shape the agenda on this issue.
III. Engage Senior Leadership: Ensure that road safety is recognised as a top priority in corporate governance. Senior leaders should visibly endorse road safety policies, allocate, and drive cultural change throughout the organisation.
IV. Embed Road Safety in Business Strategy: Integrate road safety into the overall health and safety management system, emphasising that road safety is an essential part of occupational risk management.

3. Implement Comprehensive Risk Management Programs and Policies

Action Steps:

I. Conduct Risk Assessments: Regularly assess road safety risks for all employees, particularly those who drive as part of their job, and implement tailored safety programs.
II. Develop Specific Road Safety Policies: Create clear policies covering all aspects of work-related road safety, including vehicle use, fatigue management, driver behaviour, and road safety protocols.
III. Establish Safe Driving Procedures: Implement safe driving standards, procedures for pre-trip inspections, safe vehicle usage, reporting unsafe driving practices, and ensuring vehicle maintenance.
IV. Establish New Resources: These resources could be used by small to medium businesses that may not have a capability or scope of a larger corporation.

4. Improve Data Collection and Reporting Systems

Action Steps:

I. Enhance Near-Miss and Incident Reporting: Develop and promote systems for reporting near-miss incidents to gather more comprehensive data on workplace road risks. Use this data to identify trends and develop preventive measures.

II. Establish National Data Standards: Advocate for a standardised approach to collecting and analysing work-related road safety data, including differentiating between work and non-work-related road injuries.

5. Leverage Technology for Safety Monitoring

Action Steps:

I. Continue to push for fleets to purchase vehicles with the highest level of safety and driver support systems.

II. Pilot Advanced Safety Features: Test and gradually roll out advanced safety technologies, such as lane-departure warning systems, automatic braking, and collision avoidance, across company fleets.

III. Adopt Telematics and AI Monitoring: Implement telematics systems in company vehicles to monitor driving behaviour, such as speed, braking, and acceleration. Use AI to analyse driving patterns and provide targeted feedback to improve driver safety.

IV. Utilise Fatigue Detection Systems: Invest in driver fatigue detection systems that can alert drivers and managers to potential fatigue-related risks.

6. Develop and Deliver Targeted Training Programs

Action Steps:

I. Mandatory Road Safety Training for All Drivers: Offer ongoing driver safety training that goes beyond basic skills, focusing on risk awareness, fatigue management, safe driving behaviours, and handling adverse road conditions.

II. Behavioural Training and Safety Culture Programs: Implement programs that focus on changing driving behaviours, such as speeding, tailgating, or distracted driving, and foster a culture where road safety is prioritized.

III. Management and Leadership Training: Provide training for managers to ensure they understand their role in supporting road safety initiatives, monitoring driver performance, and promoting a safety-first culture.

7. Address Fatigue and Ensure Adequate Rest

Action Steps:

I. Fatigue Risk Management Programs: Establish clear guidelines to manage fatigue, including maximum driving hours, mandatory rest breaks, and restrictions on high-risk driving times.

II. Encourage Alternate Transportation Options: Offer solutions such as vehicle pooling, shuttle services, or taxi/rideshare options when fatigue risks are identified or when employees are required to travel long distances for work.

8. Create Awareness and Cultural Change

Action Steps:

I. Establish Leadership Commitment: It's essential that change is driven from a "top down" approach. The commitment must come from the highest level and be communicated strongly to the whole organisation.
II. Raise Awareness Across the Organisation: Use internal communication channels (e.g., newsletters, workshops, intranet) to increase awareness of work-related road safety risks and the organisation's commitment to reducing road trauma.
III. Shift the Narrative on Road Safety: Promote the message that road safety is a workplace issue for all employees, not just those in delivery or transportation roles. This could include addressing commuting risks and encouraging safer travel behaviour outside of working hours.
IV. Promote Safe Road Use for Vulnerable Workers: Extend road safety programs to include workers using motorcycles, bicycles, and other vulnerable road user modes, ensuring they are equipped with proper training and safety gear.
V. Implement long term awareness campaigns: Campaigns need to be based on a longer term approach, with varying messages to help facilitate awareness and individual behavioural change.

9. Collaborate with External Partners

Action Steps:

I. Work with Industry Associations: Partner with road safety organisations, insurers, and industry groups to share best practices, improve data collection, and develop collaborative initiatives to improve road safety across sectors.
II. Engage in Public Awareness Campaigns: Collaborate with government bodies and advocacy groups to support broader public road safety campaigns that target work-related road risks, particularly for vulnerable road users like gig economy workers.

10. Support Vulnerable Road Users

Action Steps:

I. Offer Specialised Training for Vulnerable Workers: Provide additional training for workers involved in high-risk driving, including motorcyclists, cyclists, and gig economy drivers, to ensure they understand their specific safety needs.
II. Implement Safety Measures for Vulnerable Workers: Ensure that adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and safety features are provided to workers on motorcycles, bicycles, and other non-traditional vehicles.
III. Monitor and Improve Gig Economy Safety: Address emerging issues related to gig economy workers by providing them with safety training, proper equipment, and ensuring fair working conditions for those relying on motorised transport.

11. Foster a Collaborative National Framework

Action Steps:

I. Establish National Guidelines: Advocate for the development of national road safety guidelines and frameworks that address work-related driving hazards, ensuring consistency and clarity across industries.
II. Promote Collaboration Among Stakeholders: Facilitate collaboration between government, insurers, regulators, and businesses to create shared road safety goals, policies, and tools to address the unique challenges of work-related road safety.

Urgent Reform Needed in Work-Related Road Safety

Work-related road safety in Australia needs urgent and coordinated reform. Every day, thousands of workers travel for business in vehicles that vary widely in safety standards, technology, and suitability for the job.

Despite this, our national approach remains fragmented and inconsistent, leaving businesses and workers without clear guidance and without the protections they deserve.

Many of the risks are well known, inconsistent fleet standards, limited access to safer vehicles, vehicle modifications that undermine safety ratings, poor awareness around load limits and towing requirements, and gaps in policy and fleet procedures.

These issues create preventable dangers not just for workers, but for every road users. Yet, despite the scale of the problem, work-related road safety has not received the national attention or reform effort it urgently requires.

Conclusion

Work-related road trauma remains Australia's leading cause of workplace fatalities, a sobering reality that demands urgent action from government bodies, safety agencies, and corporate leaders.

Despite clear legislative requirements and alarming statistics, road safety often receives insufficient attention compared to other workplace risks.

To reverse this "scandal of tolerance," governments must enforce existing workplace safety laws, and corporations must recognise vehicles as workplaces, fully integrating road safety into their risk management systems.

A united approach is essential. One that strengthens compliance, leverages technology, fosters cultural change, and prioritises leadership accountability.

By elevating road safety to a core organisational and legislative priority, we can significantly reduce workplace injuries and fatalities, safeguarding not only employees but all road users.

The issue of work-related road safety is multi-faceted, involving numerous stakeholders, from corporate leaders to fleet managers and individual employees.

By adopting a holistic approach that incorporates education, technology, leadership, and compliance, organisations can significantly reduce road trauma and improve the safety of workers on the road. Furthermore, collaboration between government bodies, insurers, and non-profits is essential to driving change across the broader road safety landscape.

We are calling on the Federal Government to prioritise this issue and lead a unified, evidence-based approach to improving safety for all work-related driving.

National standards for fleet safety, stronger guidance on vehicle selection and modifications, consistent requirements for licence verification, and improved awareness around load management and towing are essential steps toward reducing harm.

Australia cannot afford to let work-related road safety remain an afterthought. With clear leadership and coordinated national action, we can create safer roads, safer fleets, and better protections for the people whose work depends on them every day.

The call for a "Fatality Free Future" is not just an aspiration, but an achievable goal if concerted efforts are made to address the challenges outlined in this report.

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