

**South Australian Regional Committee
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
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9 September 2016

The Hon. Stephen Mulligan MP
Minister for Transport and Infrastructure
Via email: dpti.roadsafety@sa.gov.au

RE: Draft Railway Crossing Safety Strategy

Thank you for extending us the opportunity to comment on the Draft Railway Crossing Safety Strategy.

As the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is committed to taking informed and principled positions on issues of public health at both state and federal levels.

Raising community awareness and minimising the impact of road trauma has been a key advocacy priority for RACS over many years. Our surgeons see firsthand the devastating consequences that road trauma has on individuals, families and the community more broadly. We welcome the opportunity to be part of this consultation, and commend the Government for taking steps to improve safety at South Australia's railway crossings.

The draft strategy identifies more than 30 individual strategies spread across four broader strategy areas. Our submission is focussed on the four main strategy areas identified, rather than each individual strategy.

Metropolitan Railway Crossings

RACS supports the Government's plan to grade separate new railway crossings on urban arterial roads, and to grade separate key railway crossings between Brighton and Elizabeth. We also encourage the Government to adopt similar policies to other Australian jurisdiction by engaging in a larger scale level crossing removal plan across the greater metropolitan area.

As an example, the Victorian Government recently commenced its ambitious project of removing 50 level crossings across Melbourne over the next eight years. This policy is based on a wide body of evidence-based research that highlights increased economic and safety benefits of level crossing removal. A Level Crossing Removal Authority has been established in Victoria to oversee the project.¹

RACS recommends the South Australian Government pursue a similar strategy with a vision to eventually eliminate level crossings from all metropolitan roads. We appreciate that such a project would lead to temporary disruptions and additional costs. However, we believe this would be easily outweighed by the long term improvements this will deliver to traffic management and most importantly community safety.

Metropolitan Pedestrian Crossings

RACS supports the strategy to grade separate all new railway and pedestrian crossings. We also support the closure of existing pedestrian crossings when safer alternatives exist. At all remaining pedestrian crossings

physical barriers that prevent pedestrians from entering rail lines while trains or trams are present should be explored.

Rural Railway Crossings

Despite 83 per cent of South Australia's population living in metropolitan Adelaide², 61% of all road fatalities and 46% of serious injuries occur on rural South Australian roads.³ Rural roads are often used to travel long distances at higher speeds, and by drivers who are unfamiliar with the road conditions. This leads to a higher risk of driver inattention and fatigue. The isolated nature of many of these roads places added pressures on emergency response times, due largely to the significant travel times required to receive the appropriate medical attention.⁴

In many cases the only established safety protections at rural level crossings are give-way or stop signs. In 2014 the Royal Automobile Association highlighted that four out of the five 'riskiest' level crossings in South Australia were located in rural and regional areas.⁵ Drivers who do not regularly drive on rural roads are often more accustomed to metropolitan level crossings, where boom gates and other safety precautions are predominantly present. This can potentially lead to rural drivers incorrectly identifying trains as they approach crossings, or judging the speed of the train, due to the much higher travel speeds at which trains travel in these areas.⁶

RACS recommends;

- Reducing speed limits on approach to all rural rail crossings. This is a sensible measure of alerting the driver's attention to the upcoming railway crossing.
- A longer term strategy of removing level crossings from rural roads is pursued. Where this is not possible, automatic boom gates, rumble strips, warning signs with flashing lights and speed restriction zones should be installed.
- All rail cars and engines should be marked with appropriate reflector tape along the sides to improve visibility
- When railway crossings are used infrequently and seasonally, the decision to use the crossing should be assessed by safety officers from the Road Traffic Authority, police and rail authorities before and during use, and signage and illumination should be installed
- Police should be given powers to veto the use of such a crossing if considered unsafe.

Education and Enforcement

RACS strongly agrees with any policy initiatives that will raise awareness and lead to an increased understanding of the risks associated with railway crossings. We support all of the measures that are outlined in this strategy area, and encourage ongoing funding for safety education campaigns.

RACS appreciates the opportunity to provide input to this important area of public policy. We look forward with strong interest to see how the Department progresses with this significant issue.

Yours sincerely,



Mr David Walters, FRACS
Chair, SA Regional Committee
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

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- ¹ Woodcock, I and Stone, J. The Benefits of Level Crossing Removal: Lessons From Melbourne's Historical Experiences. The University of Melbourne, 2016.
- ² Australian Bureau of Statistics. Population Projections, Australia, 2012 (base) to 2101, 2013. From: www.abs.gov.au. Accessed 7 September 2016.
- ³ Department of Transport Infrastructure and Rural Development. Fact Sheet: Rural Road Crashes in South Australia, 2014. From: http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/112332/Rural_Road_Crashes.pdf. Accessed 7 September 2016.
- ⁴ Australasian College of Road Safety. Rural Roads ACRS Policy Position. Undated. From: <http://acrs.org.au/about-us/safe-road-roadsides/rural-roads/> Accessed 7 September 2016.
- ⁵ Royal Automobile Association. Media Release- Riskiest Level Crossings in SA, 2014. From: <http://www.raa.com.au/community-and-advocacy/media-releases/1014>. Accessed 7 September 2016.
- ⁶ Wallace, A. Motorists Behaviour at Railway Level Crossings: the Present Context in Australia Queensland University of Technology, 2008.