

AAA PRESIDENT

TONY STACEY

*SaferRoads* LAUNCH

PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY 31 MARCH 2004

Thank you Lauchlan.

Minister Ian Campbell, Shadow Minister Martin Ferguson, Senators and Members of the House of Representatives, colleagues from our Safer Roads partnership, and guests.

It was 25 years ago that Australia's road toll began a downward trend from over 3,000 deaths each year to around half that. It was 7 years ago that that trend essentially stopped.

Since 1997, the national road toll has been basically stagnant. Today, like every other day this year, 550 people will be injured on our roads —60 seriously. 5 people will be killed. Our roadsides are littered with memorials to loved ones lost.

The road toll is not just a statistic. It involves sudden loss, pain, suffering and financial hardship. It changes the lives of thousands of Australian families forever.

Poor road safety is also an enormous economic burden for our nation. Each and every day, we waste more than \$40 million on road crashes – every day!

It is time we did something to stop these needless killings and injuries.

The World Health Organisation next week on April 7<sup>th</sup> will launch their “Road Safety is no accident” campaign internationally.

In Australia as to meet our own needs and to contribute to what is in essence a major health initiative, we have a new national project “*Safer Roads*.”

The *SaferRoads* partners, the Australian Automobile Association and our State based Constituent Clubs, the Australian Local Government Association, the Australian Trucking Association and the Australasian College of Road Safety, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons as well as many other organisations that support *SaferRoads*, have invited you here today to take part in a new effort to make roads safer for all Australians.

The *SaferRoads* project is an unprecedented display of cooperation between organisations concerned about road safety. It brings together a diverse group representing motorists, pedestrians, local governments, the transportation industry, medical practitioners, researchers and many others concerned about this issue of national importance.

But what more can we do to help save lives and avoid injuries?

The road safety improvements of the past didn't just happen by themselves. They happened because of the hard work and dedication of many people. We want to continue that hard work. We cannot afford to stagnate.

The *SaferRoads* project aims, first and foremost, to raise awareness in the community about the enormous impact the results of road trauma has on Australian society. It aims to broaden the debate on road safety.

This is not just a narrow 'transport' issue that we're talking about. Road safety needs to be thought of as a 'whole of community' issue. Every time someone crashes, the police are involved. Every time someone is injured, they see their doctor or end up in the hospital system. Every time traffic stops for a crash, dollars are wasted in lost productivity. And, inexorably, every time there is a serious crash, families and friends suffer. Road safety is, in reality, a preventable public health issue.

And everyone has a role to play in making roads safer – that's really what the *SaferRoads* project is about – a shared responsibility. **We need safer drivers in safer vehicles on safer roads.**

We need to continue to work to stop aggressive driving; we need to stop drink driving, driver fatigue and speeding.

We also need to build safer vehicles in which leading safety features, like airbags and other technologies are standard in all models.

We need to promote the importance of road safety in our businesses and workplaces.

And, we need to make improvements to the one area in which we have the greatest control – the roads. People should not be expected to pay the ultimate price for what is often a simple mistake. Relatively simple improvements can have a profound effect. For example, by sealing road shoulders, crash reductions of 20-40 per cent can be achieved at a cost of as little as \$2 per square metre.

Most importantly though, we need to work together on this. It's a big task that will take a big commitment, not just from governments, or from the car manufacturers or from drivers alone, but from everyone. That's what the *SaferRoads* project is about.

I am pleased that the Federal Minister for, Territories, Local Government and Roads, Senator the Honourable Ian Campbell has lent his support by launching this long term project. We do not see this as an election football—we do see it as an absolutely essential project for all Australians. All levels of government Federal, State and Local have important roles. Minister Campbell's long term vision is to be commended.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Shadow Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Martin Fergusson, who has also shown personal support for this initiative.

I would finally like to acknowledge the presence here today of Chief Medical Officer, Professor John Horvath. As I said earlier, we see road safety as being not just a

transport issue, but a preventable health issue, and Professor Horvath's presence as well as those of our many other partners such as the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons is such a demonstration of the support we have to broaden our focus.

As the World Health Organisation notes "the loss and suffering associated with road traffic deaths and injuries are preventable. With firm political will and an integrated approach that addresses vehicles, the people who use roads, and the road infrastructure, roads can be made safer"

With the help of everyone in the community, the *SaferRoads* project I hope will over time, help to prevent road crashes, to save thousands of lives and thousands of unnecessary injuries.

Thank you for your presence here today, I believe we can make this project grow over time and with your help spread throughout all of Australia.

Please let me introduce to you the Minister for Roads and Territories, Senator the Honourable Ian Campbell to officially launch this national project;

Minister,

End.