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Reducing Australia's road toll stalled: latest road safety report

- **Reducing Australia's road toll stalls in first quarter of 2020.**
- **Latest report shows South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria record steep increases in road fatalities.**
- **Government response to COVID-19 can be a model for future health and safety challenges, says peak motoring body.**

The latest Australian Automobile Association (AAA) report shows progress towards reducing Australia's road toll came to a complete standstill in the first quarter of this year, with 1,154 lives lost on the nation's roads in the 12 months to March.

The AAA's benchmarking report, which measures the performance of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020 (NRSS), confirms the road toll remained relatively unchanged from the 1,161 fatalities for the same period to March 2019.

Some states recorded serious increases over that same period, with the road toll in South Australia rising by 27.5%, in Tasmania by 23.3%, and Victoria by 11.5%.

Signed in 2011 by the Commonwealth and all State and Territory governments, the NRSS committed to reducing the road toll and injury rates by at least 30% by the end of this year.

AAA Managing Director Michael Bradley said: "This data shows that as at March 2020, prior to the COVID-19 travel restrictions, not a single state was on track to meet this target".

Despite the failures of the current NRSS, the AAA says learnings from the collective response of governments to COVID-19 provide real hope for the next strategy currently being finalised to commence next year.

"The Commonwealth Government's own independent report confirmed successive federal governments had not provided sufficiently strong leadership, coordination or advocacy on road safety to drive down national death and injury rates on our roads," Mr Bradley said.

"Pleasingly, the first steps to turn that around have started with the creation of a national Office of Road Safety. We have seen, during COVID-19, what can be achieved when there is cooperation and a laser-focus on tackling serious health issues."

Mr Bradley said in the almost ten years since the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments collectively set road safety targets, many of those were still not even measured, including the number of crashes where speed was a factor or the number of serious injuries.

"With COVID-19, governments have proven that consistent data can be collected and reported in real time," he said.

"We see now that the success of public health campaigns can be instantly changed, nuanced or targeted depending on what the health data is showing. Australians will readily change their practices when governments demonstrate and communicate an urgency.

"This success gives real hope that the next National Road Safety Strategy will be more successful than the last."

Media contact: Jake Smith jake.smith@aaa.asn.au 0403 466 153

The Australian Automobile Association is the nation's peak motoring body, representing Australia's state-based motoring clubs and their 8 million members. The AAA is an apolitical and technology-neutral advocate for federal transport policy that improves safety, affordability, and mobility.

Mailing Address: GPO Box 1555, Canberra ACT 2601 | Address: 103 Northbourne Ave, Canberra ACT 2601 | P 02 6247 731 T @aaacomms W www.aaa.asn.au

