

Draft Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy 2021-2025 Submission


The following outlines Injury Matters feedback regarding the NHVR's draft 2021-2025 Heavy Vehicle Safety Strategy.

Partnerships – the NHVR approach to heavy vehicle safety:

1. Injury Matters support the intention of the Strategy to focus on road safety not being solely a road transport problem and the need for shared responsibility to improve safety outcomes. This approach to heavy vehicle safety would be strengthened through targeted initiative with road safety stakeholders, including local governments, vehicle manufacturers, post-crash care providers and workplace insurers.
2. Injury Matters agrees that partnerships with industry and the supply chain are key elements to achieving behavioural change that improves safety, and encourage the addition of family and friends into this statement due to their invaluable role in supporting and reinforcing the safety behaviours of heavy vehicle operators.

Creating positive change in individual behaviours and culture to improve safety:

1. Injury Matters commends the Strategy on its acknowledgement of the role that heavy vehicle operators physical and mental health has on heavy vehicle safety in Australia. Given the role that poor mental health can have on an individual's driving performance, we recommend that poor mental health is added as an additional human factor that can impair heavy vehicle operation (page 4).
2. The commitment to support an "industry-for-industry" approach to addressing mental health issues and conducting advocacy activities to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of heavy vehicle operators are core components of the Strategy that Injury Matters would welcome the opportunity to work with the NHVR to achieve. Through the delivery of the Mental and Physical Safety on our Roads (MaPS) program, Injury Matters has gained significant insight into the health status of heavy vehicle operators and the key barriers that they face to optimising their mental and physical wellbeing. We would value the opportunity to work with the NHVR to expand the influence of these learnings.
3. In regards to influencing behaviour, Injury Matters recommends that this section of the Strategy is reflective of the partnerships section by acknowledging that achieving behaviour change requires collaboration beyond the heavy vehicle industry. Additionally, due to the role of access and infrastructure in influencing behaviour, Injury Matters suggest that these elements are reinforced in this section to ensure they are addressed when attempting to influence behaviour.
4. With a vast and remote road network across the nation, heavy vehicle operators are often the first to come across the scene of a road crash and can be involved in an incident in which an individual intended on using their heavy vehicle as a means of harm to self or others. Being involved in or witnessing a road traffic incident has the potential for long-term mental health consequences for the driver, with Australian research indicating that up to 29% of road traffic crash survivors develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Therefore changing behaviour regarding accessing post-crash care is essential. Compared to other industry worker compensation claims, lodgement data indicates that heavy vehicle operators are less likely to access mental health services. Injury Matters advocates for the introduction of a national post-crash




referral pathway, where anyone impacted by a road crash can be automatically contacted with varied levels of support to assist with their recovery following a crash. This pathway, alongside other initiatives, would assist heavy vehicle operators to positively influence their behaviour and the likelihood of accessing mental health services when needed. Injury Matters are a national leader in post-crash care and would be happy to discuss our model further.

5. Injury Matters welcomes the draft Strategy's alignment to the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 in its recognition of culture as a pivotal factor in supporting the safety outcomes of the heavy vehicle industry. Additionally, we support the list of items on page 5 that outline some organisational cultural changes that would enhance the safety outcomes of the heavy vehicle industry. In addition, Injury Matters recommends the addition of providing support to heavy vehicle operators to improve their work-life balance, including the provision of continued funding under the HVSI that support this.
6. Injury Matters consultation and co-design with the WA heavy vehicle industry via the MaPS on our Roads program continues to highlight the need for targeted initiatives to improve all road users understanding of how to safely share the road with heavy vehicles. Injury Matters is pleased to see initiatives targeting other road users' behaviour captured within this five-year Strategy. To ensure no duplication of initiatives or unintentional mixed messages, Injury Matters notes that a thorough assessment of what campaigns and activities are already in existence on a state and national level would be valuable prior to developing new initiatives. Injury Matters have a particular interest and demonstrated successful ongoing delivery of social marketing campaigns, which aim to change perceptions of personal responsibility on the roads. Utilising community focussed, evidence-informed, not-for profit organisations experienced in health-related behaviour change would be a beneficial avenue to achieving this component of the Strategy.

Drive uptake of a modern, safer heavy vehicle fleet that reduces the likelihood and impact of crashes:

1. Injury Matters supports the focus points outlined in this section of the Strategy due to their role that technological advances can have in improving safety within the heavy vehicle industry. This is not a topic expertise for Injury Matters, however we entrust that the proposed actions within this section align with the National Road Safety Strategy, are founded on evidence and achievable over the next five years and that any actions taken will be paired with information for the workforce to raise awareness of the safety benefits of these actions.

Influence road network design to support safe heavy vehicle use:

1. Injury Matters supports that investigation into how to improve road maintenance, road infrastructure and the availability and quality of rest areas are foundational requirements to reducing the incidence of heavy vehicle crashes across Australia. The role of rest areas on fatigue management is important, however rest stops are also influential in heavy vehicle operator's diet, exercise, and social connection of which can influence mental health and well-being. Therefore, Injury Matters suggests that these health benefits are also acknowledged within the Strategy.
 2. We congratulate the NHVR on their commitment to partner with stakeholders to improve the number and quality of rest areas, as community consultation will be key to ensuring that the investments are meeting the needs of frequent road users.
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Overall Strategy:

1. The Strategy itself notes that the “NHVR is setting an ambitious agenda” in regards to the three aims of the Strategy, however Injury Matters entrusts that the development and implementation of the Annual Action Plans will provide a blueprint of what actions will be taken to achieve the Strategy’s aims and who is responsible for implementing these activities.
2. The inability to view an Action Plan alongside the draft Strategy limits consultation participants ability to understand how the Strategy will be actioned and what budget will be provided to deliver the Action Plan. For example, Injury Matters admires the short term goals of a 50% reduction in road crash fatalities and a 30% reduction in road crash serious injuries per capita by 2030, however without knowing what actions will be taken annually to achieve these interim targets we are unable to comment on these goals.
3. Injury Matters entrusts that the annual Action Plan will include measurable objectives, as currently the priorities listed within the draft Strategy do not allow for accurate measurement and evaluation.
4. Consultation and co-design are essential to the success of any project, however there is limited reference within the draft Strategy of how this collaborative approach will be taken when implementing any initiative aligned to the Strategy. At a minimum, Injury Matters recommends that the target audience are consulted prior to committing to any initiatives within the annual Action Plan to ensure that the proposed actions will achieve the desired outcome.
5. The draft Strategy acknowledges that “because industries and organisations vary significantly, there is no one-size-fits-all safety improvement system that meets the needs of all organisations”. Injury Matters supports this statement and believes that this diversity of the industry should be reflected across all elements of the Strategy to ensure that the differing needs of the whole industry are met.
6. National Road Safety Strategy consultation results highlighted the need to better understand; the risk factors associated with heavy vehicle crashes, the extent of suicide by truck and how to best address the growing incident of suicide by truck. There is no acknowledgement within the draft Strategy of the role that research will play in understanding these needs or additional road safety concerns, such as harm to others.
7. The draft Strategy does not refer to the establishment of the \$5.5 million National Road Safety Data Hub, but Injury Matters believes it will be a valuable resource to understanding and influencing heavy vehicle priorities and therefore should be referred to within the draft Strategy.
8. Given this Strategy is just one document contributing to improved safety outcomes for heavy vehicle operators, we would welcome acknowledgement within the final Strategy or the Annual Action Plans of the potential impact that other preventative health work, such as the mental health and the National Injury Prevention Strategy may have in achieving the Strategy’s goals.
9. The graph on page two regarding “Heavy Vehicle Involved Fatalities – Trend” would benefit from an edit to ensure it outlines that the figures are for Australia.