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Tasmanian failure to meet road safety targets highlights need to do better

The RACT is calling for a rethink on the way we approach road safety in Tasmania, after the state officially failed to meet its National Road Safety Strategy targets and is one of only two Australian states to have seen a spike in the national road toll in 2020.

The Australian Automobile Association (AAA) has released its final Benchmarking the Performance of the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) 2011-2020 report, showing road crash fatalities and serious injuries had trended upwards in Tasmania throughout the life of the strategy.

RACT CEO Mark Mugnaioni said a greater understanding of what caused crashes, and new ideas to reduce them, was needed if Tasmania was to become a safe place to drive for all motorists.

“Over its 10 years, the NRSS was aimed at reducing both the annual number of road crash fatalities and serious road crash injuries by at least 30 per cent in each state across Australia. Unfortunately, the final results show that as a state, Tasmania has failed on both fronts,” Mr Mugnaioni said.

“On average between 2011 and 2020, 32 people died and 269 people were seriously injured each year on our roads. While there have been fluctuations in each year’s figures, the AAA’s reporting shows our fatality rate has consistently trended up since 2012 and has been above quarterly targets for much of the past 10 years.

“In 2011, 24 people lost their lives on our roads, while there were 272 serious crashes. In 2020, 36 people died and 284 were seriously injured. Serious crashes remain high, while fatalities have increased by 50 per cent when comparing those two years alone.

“These increases have come despite advances in vehicle safety, significant road network funding from all levels of government, increased police enforcement for speeding, mobile phone use and drink/drug driving, and increased education and public awareness campaigns.

“What this shows is that we need to broaden our collective thinking about road safety and develop new ideas to improve it for all Tasmanians, and most importantly save lives.

“Now is the time to do so off the back of the failure of the most recent strategy, and while consideration of the new strategy is taking place.”