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Mixed results for WA's National Highway Network

The safety of Western Australia's National road network has received mixed results in an Australian road assessment report released today by the RAC.

The report, entitled *How Safe are our Roads - Rating Australia's National Network for Risk*, showed an increase in overall fatalities on WA's federal roads in the periods between 2000-04 and 2005-09 but a decrease in overall casualty crashes during the same period.

According to the report nearly 50 per cent of fatalities occurred on the Great Northern Highway which makes up 66 per cent of the length of WA's entire National Highway Network.

In contrast the Perth Bunbury highway accounted for 29 per cent of fatalities, but was just two per cent of the length of the overall National Network.

The report also highlighted an increase in the number of 'low' risk links in WA and a decrease in the number of high risk links.

RAC Spokesperson Adrian Firth said the report showed that while there had been some improvement in the safety performance of the National Road Network in WA, more needed to be done.

"Safe roads are a vital component of reducing the road toll, but there are still too many people being killed or injured in crashes because of lagging road upgrades and maintenance," Mr Firth said.

"It is acknowledged that major, well-travelled highways need continual investment to improve safety.

"A wide range of relatively low-cost treatments are available to improve the safety of rural roads and these include removing roadside hazards or protecting them with barriers, providing or sealing shoulders and installing tactile edge lines to alert drivers who stray off the road."

The report also identified the Great Eastern Highway between Mundaring and Northam was the worst performing section of National Highway from a safety perspective.

"Casualty crashes on the Great Eastern Highway between Mundaring and Northam have improved since the last report in 2007 but it remains one of the riskiest sections of Federal road in WA.



“As the primary link to and from the Eastern States traffic volumes on Great Eastern Highway are expected to increase. Even though more remedial work is scheduled, it should be a road that is looked at more closely by the road authorities.”

The report also highlighted that while the number of casualty crashes on the old Perth Bunbury Highway had reduced by a third, the number of fatalities had more than doubled.

“The old Perth Bunbury Highway was without doubt WA’s worst National Road but the construction of the new Forrest Highway is a good example of how targeted investment can deliver opportunities to improve road safety performance.”

RAC is working with the AAA and the other clubs to carry out more detailed assessment on selected roads (star rating) to help pin point where improvements are needed.

ENDS

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