An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road winding through a vast, arid landscape with reddish-brown soil and sparse, low-lying vegetation. The road is marked with white dashed lines. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, looking down at the road as it curves through the terrain.

**An affordable, sustainable
and safer NT.**

**Northern Territory
Election Priorities
2024**

The logo for AANT (Australian Northern Territory) features the letters 'AANT' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A red, stylized wave or ribbon graphic is positioned behind the letters, starting under the first 'A' and extending under the 'N'.

AANT



805

AANT

ISUZU

CD-71-X
N.T. OUTBACK AUSTRALIA



About AANT

Established in 1963, the Australian Automobile Association NT (AANT) is the largest membership-based organisation in the Northern Territory, serving 20 000+ members, delivering roadside assistance, insurance, travel, motoring advice and advocacy.

Our *2024 Election Priorities* are based on issues our members care about, and changes AANT believes will deliver real improvement for the Northern Territory.

AANT aligns with a number of important Territory and Australian initiatives on road safety:

Following the NT Government's *Towards Zero 2018-2022 Road Safety Action Plan*, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) is developing a new NT Road Safety Action Plan for 2024-2028. AANT has provided input to support its development, via feedback to an action plan discussion paper. AANT's NT Election Priorities are consistent with the feedback provided in the discussion paper.

The National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS) 2021-2030 and the National Road Safety Action Plan 2023-2025 (NRSAP). The NRSS aims to reduce deaths from road crashes by 50% and serious injuries by 30% by 2030. These ambitious targets are supported by the Action Plan to 2025, which was released in May 2023.

AANT is a member of the Black Spot Consultative Panel managed by the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Logistics (DIPL).

Now, more than ever, our members need us to advocate for them and be their voice in the lead up to the 2024 Northern Territory Election, to ensure roads and transport are meeting their needs, and the needs of their communities. AANT understands that mobility is the key to a thriving economy and underpins the community's ability to access employment, health care, education, and recreation.

The *2024 Election Priorities* outlines the key programs, projects and initiatives AANT believes the next NT Government must adopt to:

- › Reduce road deaths and serious crashes on Territory roads
- › Improve the resilience of our road network
- › Ensure road funding decisions are based on need
- › Ensure owning and operating a car is affordable for all Territorians; and
- › Serve the needs of Territorians in a rapidly changing transport landscape.

Increased investment in safer, affordable, and sustainable mobility will result in reduced pressure on our health system, economic prosperity, and better outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

Of critical importance, is the need to reduce the number of lives lost on Territory roads. Too many families are left devastated by the loss of loved ones. On average,

forty people are killed each year on NT roadsⁱ and 470 people suffer significant injuries. In the five months to the end of May 2024, 24 lives have already been lost on Territory Roads.ⁱⁱ These tragedies affect not just families, friends, and loved ones but have a ripple effect across entire communities.

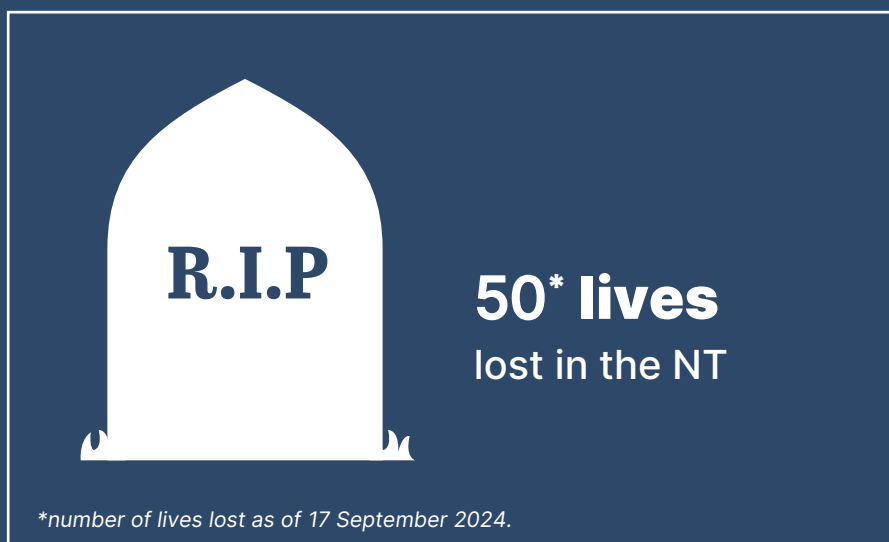
We need improvements to the road network, and we need to be given confidence that road infrastructure decisions are data driven, and not politically motivated.

We also need to better tackle unsafe driving behaviours through a combination of higher levels of visible enforcement and community-lead road safety initiatives.

AANT is focussed on improving quality of life for all Territorians and is committed to addressing our members concerns around road safety, transport costs and the condition of our roads. We are calling on political parties contesting the 2024 NT Election to share our commitment to meet the future mobility needs of our community.

Territorians deserve safe roads, data-driven road investment, better transport affordability as well as clear communication, good policy, and strong leadership from government around the transition to new vehicle technology.

This document outlines the key policies and priorities the Northern Territory Government must adopt.



Reduce road deaths and serious crashes

The Problem

An unforgivably high number of people continue to be killed and seriously injured on Northern Territory roads. NT has the highest rate of road deaths of all Australian jurisdictions with a fatality rate per capita at least 3.2 times the national rate.

The impacts on family, friends, workplaces, first responders and the wider community are immense. Aside from the immeasurable personal and social impacts, the financial cost of road trauma is significant and is estimated at \$2.85 million per fatalityⁱⁱⁱ. Based on the decade average of 40 fatalities per annum, this represents an annual cost to the NT of around \$114 million. Nationally, the cost is close to \$30 billion.

AANT readily acknowledge that finding solutions is not easy. The Territory faces many unique challenges in achieving better road safety outcomes and delivering a road network that is safe for all road users. We must contend with remoteness, sudden changes in road and weather conditions and a widely dispersed population base. Nonetheless, we must take more action to deliver a safer Territory road and transport system.

Greater investment in NT's road network is critical to improving road safety outcomes. An analysis of various business cases for safer roads show that fatalities and serious injuries are inversely proportional to the AusRAP

rating of the road network. In other words, as the rating of a road network increases, deaths and serious injuries decrease^{iv}.

To deliver safer roads, continued capital investment is required in conjunction with low cost, high impact safety treatments such as wide centre lines, safety barriers, roadside hazard removal and more overtaking lanes.

Upgrades to address inadequate road infrastructure is required to protect NT motorists. With continued investment in the network, the Territory can reduce road fatalities and bring down the rate of serious injuries.

AusRAP ratings, which provide an objective assessment of the quality and condition of our road network, is not currently publicly available. Ratings should be made available to give public confidence in infrastructure investment decision making. Similarly, education and awareness programs are strategies that provide long-term road safety improvements. Both need to be deployed in increased measures as an effective way to reduce road deaths.



The Financial Cost of Road Trauma in the NT



\$2.85 Million

Cost per Fatality

X

40 Fatalities

per year decade average



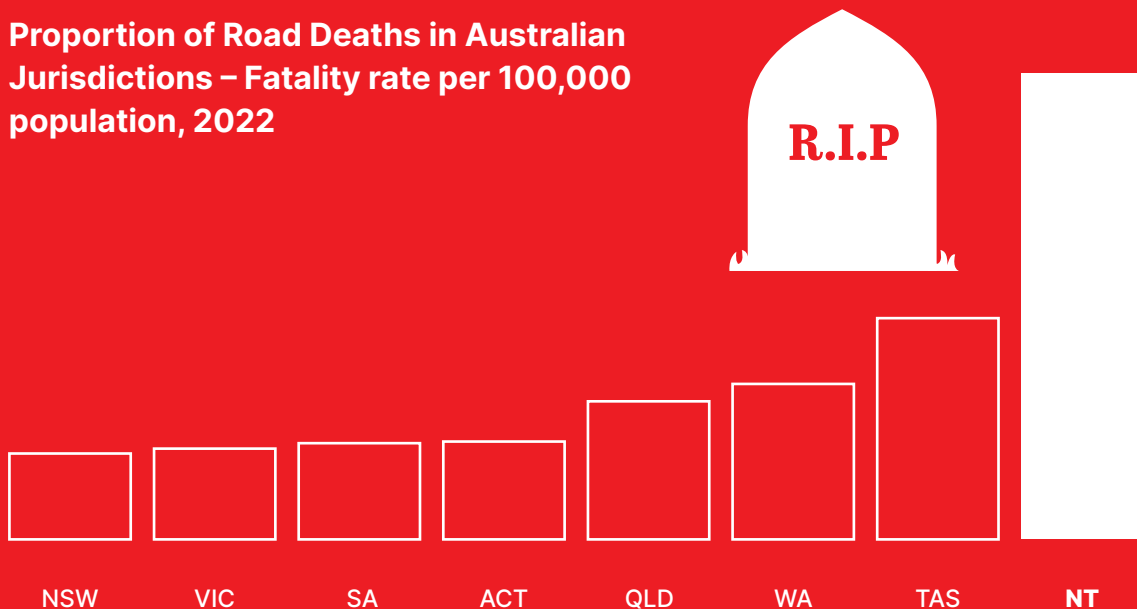
=



\$114 Million

Annual Cost to the NT

Proportion of Road Deaths in Australian Jurisdictions – Fatality rate per 100,000 population, 2022



Source: Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE), 2023, International road safety comparisons 2022 BITRE, Canberra ACT.

Every road fatality is a tragedy that has lasting impacts. Effective enforcement can achieve crash reductions in the shorter term and is viewed as a cost-effective means of enhancing road safety. Similarly, education and awareness programs are strategies that provide long-term road safety improvements.

Increasing the number of marked police patrols in high-risk locations is an effective way to combat the Fatal Five behaviours – speeding, drink, or drug driving, not wearing a seatbelt and driving when fatigued or distracted. When these factors are removed from driving behaviour, the chances of being involved in a fatal crash decrease exponentially. As a result, AANT supports visible, on-road police patrols targeting high risk groups and locations.

A visible on-road presence is the most effective means of slowing drivers down and ensuring compliance with road safety laws. Moreover, on-road police patrols provide an “anywhere anytime” presence that cannot be replicated by automated enforcement measures such as fixed speed and red-light cameras.

A long-term funding commitment should also be provided to the annual Street Smart High program to take the program to high school students right across the Territory. Street Smart High raises awareness and addresses the unacceptable levels of road trauma experienced by young drivers and their passengers on NT roads. The program provides learner and novice drivers with education around driving risks and behaviours that place themselves and others in danger.

Aboriginal people continue to be over-represented in Territory road deaths and serious injuries. Aboriginal people represent approximately 30% of the Northern Territory’s population but comprise 52% of NT road deaths^v.

AANT recognise the difficulties and complexities in delivering better road safety outcomes for Aboriginal people. Road law compliance is a major problem, evidenced by the fact that 65% of Aboriginal drivers involved in a fatal crash in the period 2012-2021 had a cancelled, suspended, or disqualified license status^{vi}.

Seatbelt non-compliance and vehicle overcrowding continue to be significant risk factors for Aboriginal drivers and passengers^{vii}.

85% of all pedestrian fatalities were Aboriginal people, with most under the influence of alcohol^{viii}.

AANT supports the establishment and fostering of partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations to develop place-based and community-lead programs to address local road safety challenges.

NT and Victoria are now the only jurisdictions where emergency roadside assistance workers are not protected by reduced speed limits, by the rule known nationally as the ‘Slow Down, Move Over’ rule.

It is now time for the Northern Territory Government to ensure “yellow lights” emergency roadside assistance workers and tow truck drivers are provided the same protection as in other States.

Proposed Solution

To reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on NT roads, the next Territory Government must:

- › Increase investment in Territory roads to make our roads safer.
- › Tackle unsafe driving behaviours through increased on-road Police presence and continued education.
- › Provide a long-term funding commitment to Street Smart High that allows the program to be delivered to high school students right across the Territory.
- › Develop place-based and community-lead programs to address local road safety challenges in Aboriginal communities, delivered in-language.
- › Fall into line with all other States and Territories (excluding Victoria) and urgently introduce legislation to protect AANT emergency roadside assistance workers.

Make Territory roads more resilient to extreme weather



The Problem

Our roads, which connect us to our communities, and to the rest of Australia, must be able to better withstand extreme weather.

Recent wet season weather serves as a constant reminder to Territorians how vulnerable and fragile our road infrastructure is. Wet weather resulted in cuts to our supply chains and led to shortages of groceries, consumer goods and business supplies.

It has become obvious that many of our most important roads, including parts of the Stuart Highway, are

ill-equipped to cope with extreme, yet increasingly frequent, weather events.

Improving the resilience of our road infrastructure by identifying our highest risk roads for weather-related disruptions and building alternatives if the route is impassable, is an immediate priority.

Proposed Solution

To improve our road resilience the next Territory Government must:

- › Prioritise improvements in roads of economic and social importance that are not currently flood-proofed, including a fully funded plan where the consequences of a road being impassable are most significant.

Ensure road funding decisions are based on need



The Problem

The investment into road safety at all levels of government is not resulting in improved road safety and road trauma statistics remain well above published targets.

Australia's annual road deaths are now 15.4 per cent higher than when the Australian National Road Safety Strategy began in 2011^x.

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of road deaths when compared with all Australian jurisdictions (on a per capita basis and per 100,000 head of population).

The Federal Government provides states and territories with \$10 billion in road funding each year, yet the number of people dying on our roads is rising^x. In May 2024, the Federal Government announced States and

Territories will be required to provide road safety data to the newly created National Road Safety Data Hub. The Hub will enable data to be accessed by the Federal Government, State and Territory Governments, road safety experts, and the public, to work collaboratively to publish, share and analyse data to drive down road trauma.

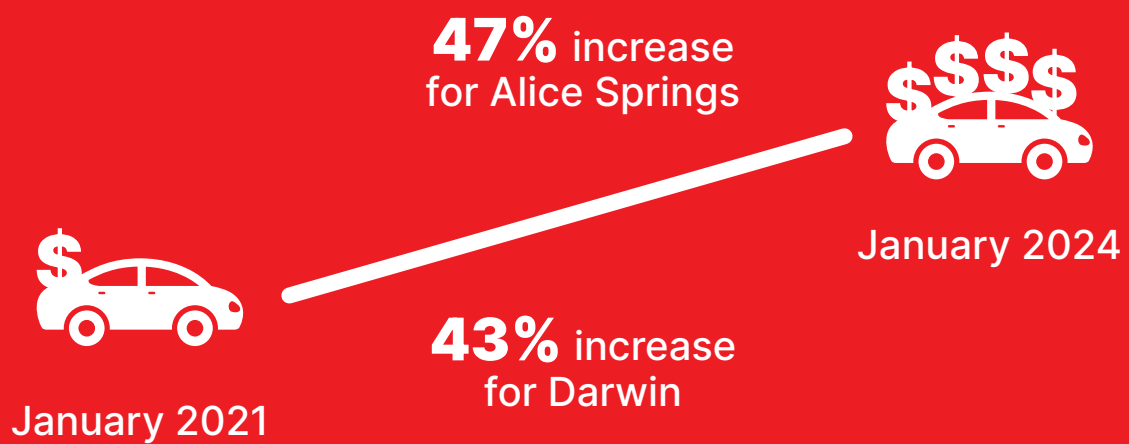
Sharing standardised data on road quality, crash causes, and the effectiveness of law enforcement measures, will enable road safety experts and decision makers to gather a clear picture, underpinned by data about where to best direct road funding.

Proposed Solution

To ensure NT road funding decision-making is evidence based, the next Territory Government must:

- › Commit to providing road safety data to the Federal Government's National Road Safety Data Hub.
- › Have the systems and infrastructure in place to share accurate and complete data.
- › Demonstrate integrity in funding decisions and give confidence to the NT public that their tax dollars are being spent where most needed.

Rising Transport Costs in Alice Springs and Darwin



Improve transport affordability



The Problem

Transport affordability is impacting quality of life for many Territorians.

In the three-year period from January 2021 to January 2024, average household transport costs in Alice Springs rose 47% from \$14,993 to \$22,082 per annum.

In the same period, average household transport costs in Darwin increased 43% from \$15,668 to \$22,417 per annum^{xi}.

AANT members have consistently identified affordability as the transport issue most important to them.

AANT welcomed the recent decision by the NT Government to minimise the increase to vehicle registration to around 1%, to be achieved by freezing the compulsory third party insurance component included in the cost of registration. More needs to be done however to make a meaningful difference to the cost of living to Territorians.

Proposed Solution

To ease the cost of living for NT motorists, the next Territory Government must:

- › Introduce a three-year freeze on motor vehicle registration fees, license fees and public transport fares.
- › Continue to provide registration and stamp duty concessions for the purchase of low and zero emissions vehicles.

Serve the needs of Territorians in a rapidly changing transport landscape



The Problem

As the world transitions to electric vehicles, there is currently an absence of fuel-efficient technology in 4WD and light commercial vehicles - vehicles that Territorians continue to love and rely on. The Federal Government's New Vehicle Emissions Standard, set to be introduced on 1 January 2025, could potentially expose Territorians to higher new vehicle purchase costs.

Territorians' appetite for zero and low emission vehicles continues to grow and in Quarter 1 2024, made up 17.1% of all new NT vehicles sold^{xii}. The New Vehicle Efficiency Standard will see a broader range of electric vehicles arrive on the market, further accelerating the transition that is already well underway.

To keep pace with the transition, Australia will require:

- › A far greater focus on skills development and training the workforce that will be required to safely maintain the new fleet
- › Greater investment in recharging infrastructure and
- › Planning and management of the Australian electricity grid in order to cope with the increased electricity demand.

These are all issues of keen interest to NT residents. If Australians do not feel confident in the resources, systems and infrastructure required to support the transition to EVs there is a real risk that this will threaten the achievability of the targets set in the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard. The consequence of failing to meet targets will be the imposition of additional cost to vehicle brands that don't meet the standard, through trading of credits and/or fines. This will result in vehicles becoming more expensive when these costs are passed on to consumers.

This will have direct consequences for Territorians. The vehicles that will take the biggest hit in terms of price increases are vehicles with higher emissions - vehicles used in industries and activities that support the NT economy and underpin the Top End lifestyle.

Territorians depend on these vehicles because our remoteness and dispersed population means that we cannot rely on current EV technology outside of urban areas.

We need vehicles that can operate over significant distances, with access to distribution and maintenance networks often many hundreds of kilometres away from urban areas.

Over time, we will see the technology catch up. In the interim however, NT Government needs to ensure the National Vehicle Emissions Standard does not adversely impact Territorians and the key industries that underpin our economy such as agriculture, transportation, mining, tourism, and recreation.

We need to accommodate the extensive distances we travel and our varied lifestyles but equally, NT motorists should have the choice to adopt new technologies and choose the transport technology option that best suit their lifestyle, household budget, and commuting needs.

We also need to ensure the Territory is not left behind with greater investment in charging infrastructure, upskilling of our workforce and improved vehicle purchase incentives.



Proposed Solution

To ensure a sensible approach to the transition to low and zero emission vehicles, the next Territory Government must:

- › Safeguard Territorians against possible adverse effects of excessively aggressive targets under the introduction of the National Vehicle Emissions Standard.
- › Introduce an EV Infrastructure working group, comprised of relevant government, energy, and industry stakeholders to develop a Territory EV Plan.
- › Increase incentives for Territorians to invest in electric vehicles, particularly hybrid vehicles, which remain the most practical EV option for many Territorians.
- › Increase charging infrastructure to connect the Territory and meet anticipated demand for EV technology, especially in locations where non-government investment is not commercially viable.
- › Build a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to support EV's and renewable energy technology.
- › Deliver a reliable electricity supply network capable of meeting a substantial increase in demand.
- › Communicate with Territorians to provide better quality information, including real-time information on available EV charging infrastructure.

References

- i. Northern Territory Government – Department of Industry, Planning and Logistics [Developing a new Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2028](#)
- ii. NT Department of Police Fire and Emergency Services
- iii. Northern Territory Government – Department of Industry, Planning and Logistics [Developing a new Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2028](#)
- iv. Australian Road Assessment (AusRAP) www.ausroads.com.au
- v. Road Safety NT Aboriginal Road Safety [Towards Zero](#)
- vi. Northern Territory Government – Department of Industry, Planning and Logistics [Developing a new Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2028](#)
- vii. Road Safety NT Aboriginal Road Safety [Towards Zero](#)
- viii. Northern Territory Government – Department of Industry, Planning and Logistics [Developing a new Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2028](#)
- ix. AAA [Benchmarking The Performance of the National Road Safety Strategy](#) December Quarter 2023, pp 5
- x. Road Safety NT [Towards Zero](#)
- xi. Australian Automobile Association Transport Affordability Index www.data.aaa.asn.au/transport-affordability
- xii. Australian Automobile Association Media Release BEVs and Hybrid Sales Grow Strongly – April 2024



Automobile Association of the Northern Territory Inc.

2/14 Knuckey Street, Darwin NT 0800

For more information contact:

Simon Matthias – Chief Executive Officer

P (08) 8925 5901

E smatthias@aat.com.au

Suzie Goodman – Media, Advocacy and Communications Advisor

E SGoodman@aat.com.au



www.aant.com.au