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Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness Secretariat  
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### **Submission on the role of road safety in Australia's aid program**

Dear Sir/Madam,

This submission relates to the potential role of AusAID in supporting efforts to reduce road trauma in developing countries. It addresses one of the areas set out in the Scope section of the Terms of Reference, under "a. The structure of the program": "the appropriate sectoral focus of the program, taking into account Australia's area of comparative advantage and measured development effectiveness results."

In 2009 the World Health Organisation released its Global Status Report on Road Safety, which states that "More than 1.2 million people die on the world's roads every year, and as many as 50 million others are injured. Over 90% of the deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries" (p. iv). The Global Status Report notes that this proportion is likely to grow in the next two decades as motorisation levels increase. A crucial issue for developing countries is that the great majority of those killed on the road are aged between 15 and 40, when their contribution to the economy is greatest, and when they are likely to have an extended family reliant on their income. The death of one person on the roads can therefore have a direct impact on the poverty of many other people, as well as an indirect effect on the country's economy.

The importance of this issue has been recognised with the announcement on the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, which will be launched later this year (11 May, 2011). It would therefore be appropriate for AusAID to place a priority on funding efforts aimed at reducing road trauma in developing countries, especially given that Australia is recognised as a leader in road safety internationally, with a history of innovation in policies and programs which have contributed to substantial reductions in road fatalities over the past few decades.

While road safety has not been ignored in the past, AusAID support and the organisation of AusAID priorities have focused only on limited aspects of the larger road safety problem:

- At one stage, modest amounts of funding to improve road safety were administered by the Infrastructure area of AusAID. However reducing road trauma is not just about better roads (and their demonstrated economic benefits), and better trained engineers – road environment factors are involved in approximately only 30% of fatal crashes.
- More recently, road safety was included under the Disability priority of AusAID, however this recognises only one facet of the impact of road crashes, and casts road crash prevention only as a means to achieve a reduction in disability, rather than as an end in itself.

A more fundamental error in pursuing road safety in developing countries is to think of road safety simply as a set of common sense actions which need to be taken – pass a particular law, run a particular education campaign, etc. Ample evidence has accumulated to show that the

implementation of simplistic solutions is rarely effective. Looking at the development of road safety in Australia over the past 50 years, this is no surprise – this period has been marked by the rise of a scientific approach to road safety, based on evidence and supported by research and evaluation. The professionalization of the area has increased, and with it specialised education in road safety and related areas, to the point where Australia has much to offer, and arguably has an obligation to share the benefits of its accumulated knowledge and expertise. In developing countries there is a dearth of this kind of capacity – a lack of middle and higher level officials with training in the evidence-based approach to road safety. Such training as occurs is heavily weighted towards engineering, when it is widely acknowledged that there are shortcomings with enforcement, with road user awareness and training, with management of road safety at mid to high levels, and with cooperation between the various agencies responsible for road safety.

In the past 10 years, our Centre (CARRS-Q) has undertaken road safety research and education in Asian countries including Pakistan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, and explored opportunities for capacity building activities in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Fiji, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea, among others. We have also explored opportunities in developing countries outside the Asian region, including Nigeria, Yemen and Ethiopia. The approach that we recommend, based on our experience, is:

- Include the reduction of road trauma as a specific aid priority, in line with the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020;
- Explicitly acknowledge the need for capacity building in terms of knowledge and interagency cooperation;
- Provide funding for capacity building in road safety, aimed at increasing the knowledge and skills of mid to high level officials while promoting cross-agency collaboration;
- Provide modest funding to support pilot projects, including an evaluation component; and
- Explicitly recognise the link between road safety and governance (the role of police and enforcement).

As a recognised world leader in road safety education, evaluation and injury prevention, CARRS-Q recognises that AusAID has previously provided some resources to begin addressing the issue of preventing road-related death, injury, and suffering from road crashes. However, we believe that much greater attention and prioritising is needed from countries such as Australia if significant gains are to be made to assist developing countries to establish the means to reduce the suffering. The evidence overwhelmingly supports our belief.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07 3138 4546 or [mark.king@qut.edu.au](mailto:mark.king@qut.edu.au).

Yours sincerely

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on behalf of the International Development Committee  
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