



Your Ref: 6363-04454
Our Ref: F17- 488 / D17-13707

Hon Michelle Roberts MLA
Minister for Police; Road Safety
Level 12, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
West Perth WA 6005

Dear Minister

RE: MINISTERIAL CORRESPONDENCE - SECTION 6 A OF THE ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL ACT 2002 – SW EMERGENCY HELICOPTER SERVICE FUNDING

The Road Safety Council (the Council) met on the 22nd November 2017 to consider your letter of 10 November 2017, where you informed the Council of the Government's proposal to source \$4.65 million (m) per annum of unallocated funds from the Road Trauma Trust Account (RTTA) to use towards the operation of the South West Emergency Helicopter Service commencing in 2019-20.

Section 6 (A) (2) of the *Road Safety Council Act 2002* (the Act), requires the Council to recommend to the Minister as to whether or not money standing to the credit of the RTTA should be spent in accordance with the proposal or if the proposal should be modified.

The Council noted that the South-West Emergency Helicopter Service commenced as a Royalties for Regions (RfR) project and Government funding will continue past 2019-20; however, RfR will only provide the balance of costs above the proposed \$4.65 million from the RTTA. The proposal received from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) states this contribution to be 50% of operational costs.

Under Section 5 of the Act, the Council makes recommendations to improve the safety of roads and to reduce deaths and injuries to people resulting from incidents occurring on the State's roads. The helicopter service meets this requirement, as the proposal states that, since 1 February 2016, over 60% of the retrievals by the South-West Emergency Helicopter Service resulted from crashes on the South-West regional road network. DFES puts the Helicopter Service forward as being the fastest means of delivering patients to appropriate care, which improves trauma survivability and recovery outcomes.

Improved emergency services, including timeliness of rescue response, improve health outcomes from road crashes. Funding such initiatives, however, results in an opportunity cost in limiting the funding available for other initiatives that may reduce the number of crashes where people are killed or seriously injured.

Under the *Towards Zero Road Safety Strategy* for 2008-2020, Western Australia has embarked upon an ambitious journey to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads by 40%. As at the end of 2015, a 28% reduction has been achieved including a 56% reduction amongst young people aged 17-19.

The major contributors to this encouraging result are the application of low cost, high value safety focussed engineering treatments that decrease accidents at intersections and reduce single vehicle run off crashes on regional roads, increased enforcement of speeding and impaired driving, education, speed limit revisions, the uptake of safe vehicles and improved post-crash care.

To assist the Government and the community achieve the *Towards Zero* target to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured by 2020, the Road Safety Council recommends to the Minister annual RTTA budgets containing priority projects that reduce serious crashes. To inform the development of the 2018-19 RTTA Budget, based on crash trend data, the Council has recommended five crash reduction priorities:

1. improving the safety of intersections;
2. reducing single vehicle run off the road crashes;
3. reducing impaired (drink and drug) driving crashes;
4. reducing crashes due to inappropriate or excessive speed; and
5. reducing serious crashes involving cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists.

Run off road crashes are the most common crash type on high speed rural roads, comprising 60% of all serious crashes occurring on regional roads between 2008 and 2012. Intersection crashes are the most common crash type occurring in urban settings in regional areas.

Examples of RTTA funded initiatives that directly address the crash reduction priorities include the regional run off crash program, which applies low cost, high value safety focussed engineering treatments, such as shoulder sealing and audible edge-lines. This program has been found by Curtin Monash University Accident Research Centre to have achieved a 26% reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on the treated road lengths, achieving a net present value of \$100 m at a benefit cost of 2.1:1 over three years. Another RTTA program funding the installation of speed and red-light cameras at urban intersections has reduced the number of people killed and seriously injured at the treated intersections by up to 72% at a benefit cost of 1.8:1.

In providing recommendations to the Minister, the Council is aware of its broader functions under Section 5 (a-e) of the Act to recommend measures that reduce the impact of road crashes, together with the Council's function under Section 5 (f) of the Act to recommend how money standing to the credit of the Account should be spent to implement those measures.

The Council recognises it is the overall effort and funding allocations across Government and the community, not just the RTTA, that have the greatest impact on reducing road trauma to achieve the reduction target of the State's *Towards Zero* strategy. However, everything else being equal, the extent to which RTTA funds are prioritised and allocated for actions that prevent serious crashes maximises the use of the fund to improve road safety.

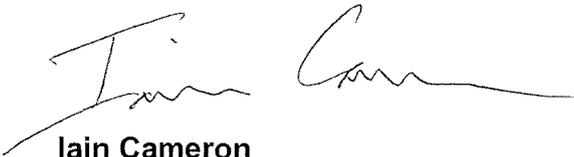
The proposal to apply unallocated RTTA funds for the operation of the helicopter emergency rescue does not impact on current programs. However, with current projections of declining revenue, potential annual increases in the operating costs for the helicopter and potential expectations of funding for more helicopter services, there is a risk the amount of RTTA funds available for other initiatives that prevent or avoid serious crashes may be reduced.

Recommendations

The Road Safety Council recommends that:

1. An amount of \$4.6 m per annum, for part of the operating cost of the South-West Emergency Helicopter Service, be allocated from the RTTA from 2019-20 for an initial three years and be subject to review within three years to consider the initiative's contribution to reducing road trauma and its continuing priority in the context of the priorities to be identified for the next State road safety strategy beyond 2020.
2. The Minister notes that, under the State's *Towards Zero* Strategy 2008-2020, there has been a 28% reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured on WA roads. If WA is to achieve the target of a 40% reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured by 2020, further investment in evidence based activities that work to prevent serious crashes from occurring is required from the RTTA and other sources.
3. The Minister notes that, based on crash trend data, the Council has identified five crash reduction priorities to inform RTTA budget submissions for 2018/19:
 - a. improving the safety of intersections;
 - b. reducing single vehicle run off the road crashes;
 - c. reducing impaired (drink and drug) driving crashes;
 - d. reducing crashes due to inappropriate or excessive speed; and
 - e. reducing serious crashes involving cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists.

Yours sincerely



Iain Cameron
Chair- Road Safety Council

27th November 2017