

# PREFACE

## SCOPE OF ACCIDENT STATISTICS

### Accident statistics included in this Statistical Statement

The accident statistics recorded by the Roads and Traffic Authority and included in this Statistical Statement are confined to those accidents which conform to the national guidelines for reporting and classifying road vehicle accidents. The main criteria are:

1. The accident was reported to the police
2. The accident occurred on a road open to the public
3. The accident involved at least one moving road vehicle
4. The accident involved at least one person being killed or injured or at least one motor vehicle being towed away.

Reports for some accidents are not received until well into the following year and after the annual accident database has been finalised. These amount to some 2% of recorded accidents and are counted in the following year's statistics.

### Criteria for reporting accidents in 2000

Prior to 2000, section 8 (3) of the Traffic Act 1909 required a road accident in New South Wales to be reported to the police when any person was killed or injured or property damage over \$500 was sustained.

On 1 December 1999, the Traffic Act was repealed and replaced by new traffic legislation including the adoption of the Australian Road Rules. The new traffic legislation is found in the Road Transport (General) Act 1999 and the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999 and the regulations made under those Acts.

Rule 287 (3) of the Australian Road Rules requires an accident to be reported to police when any person is killed or injured; when drivers involved in the accident do not exchange particulars; or when a vehicle involved in the accident is towed away.

## HOW ACCIDENT DATA ARE PROCESSED

The processing of accident data in New South Wales directly involves three organisations: the NSW Police Service, the Australian Quadriplegic Association (AQA) and the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA). Within the RTA, the Road Safety Strategy Branch is responsible for the collation and dissemination of road traffic accident data.

From July 1997, as part of a police initiative, the practice of recording a traffic accident on a P4 report was abandoned. It was replaced by a system whereby information relating to a traffic accident is entered directly into COPS (Computerised Operational Policing System) by a police officer, using details in the officer's notebook. This has come to be known as the paperless system.

A sketch of the accident site, a component of the original P4 report, has been retained and is completed for accidents where a police officer attended the accident scene. The sketch is sent to a central office of the Police Service for microfilming and logging.

Under the paperless system, completed and checked data are transferred from COPS to computer disk on a weekly basis and forwarded to the RTA. There they are loaded into the RTA's Traffic Accident Database System (TADS) for enhancement and validation. This system predominantly results in the data electronically captured and supplied by the Police Service being reproduced on paper as a pseudo P4 (PP4), resembling the original P4.

The PP4s and sketches described above are forwarded to the Mascot office of the AQA, a business enterprise employing physically disabled people, which is contracted to the RTA to provide a coding and data entry service. Accurate location information is determined for each accident and the comprehensive narrative describing the accident is interpreted and validated, then used to make additions to TADS via an on-line data entry system.

Each night a computer checking process is performed to identify inconsistencies and errors which may have occurred during the data entry and validation phases. Daily editing of the data is then undertaken until a 'clean' file is obtained for every accident. In addition, results of blood alcohol analyses are regularly obtained from the Western Sydney Area Health Service's Division of Analytical Laboratories. A further checking process is undertaken each quarter to identify and correct any anomalies in the data prior to its finalisation.

In the case of a fatal accident, police officers send a preliminary report, generated from COPS, by facsimile to the RTA within a matter of hours. This provides basic information which is used to compile a preliminary database of fatal accidents. Hence, it is possible to monitor and analyse fatal accidents on a daily basis. A sketch of the accident scene is usually supplied a few days later which enables location and accident details to be confirmed and updated if required. Final fatal accident data are captured upon receipt of the data electronically from the Police Service.

The Road Safety Strategy Branch's accident database is used extensively within the RTA for monitoring and research work, strategic planning and the production of routine reports and analyses. Members of the public and organisations such as the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, NSW Police Service, National Roads and Motorist's Association, Australian Bureau of Statistics and Local Governments also regularly access the information.

## SPECIAL NOTES

### Changes to Tables

A new **Table 14** has been introduced with Police RBT figures replaced by a tabulation of accidents by alcohol involvement and urbanisation.

**Table 35** showing Hospital Inpatient Statistics has been deleted as data consistent with previous publications were not available.

### Comparing Data with Previous Years

Due to the introduction by police of the paperless system described in **How Accident Data are Processed**, there may be inconsistencies in the reporting of some data fields. In particular, the classification of injury data into serious injury or other injury was discontinued from 1998 as the Police reported "admitted to hospital" was no longer considered reliable. Furthermore, the assignment of an unknown value has increased in frequency for a number of fields and decreased in others. Care should therefore be taken when making comparisons with data from previous years.

### Pedal cycle accidents

It is recognised that a substantial proportion of non-fatal pedal cycle accidents are not reported to police. As the Police Service is the only source of accident notification used in this statement, statistics relating to pedal cycle accidents may not accurately reflect the situation.

## CONVENTION FOR TABLE HEADINGS

The first word(s) in the title of a table indicates the data items being counted. For example, Table 5 gives counts of casualties, Table 13 gives counts of accidents and Table 29 gives counts of motor vehicle controller casualties. Remaining words in the table titles indicate the classification variables.

## DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

*Accident:* Any apparently unpremeditated event reported to the police and resulting in death, injury or property damage attributable to the movement of a road vehicle on a road.

*Animal rider:* A person sitting on/riding a horse or other animal.

*Articulated truck:* Comprised of articulated tanker, semi-trailer, low loader, road train and B-double.

*Bicycle rider:* See *Pedal cycle rider*.

*Bus:* Includes 'State Transit Authority' bus and long distance/tourist coach.

*Car:* Includes sedan, station wagon, utility (based on car design), panel van (based on car design), coupe, hatchback, fastback, sports car, taxi-cab, passenger van and four wheel drive vehicle.

*Carriageway:* That part of the road improved or designed and/or ordinarily used for vehicular movement. When a road has two or more of these portions, divided by a median strip or other physical separation, each of these is a separate carriageway.

*Casualty:* Any person killed or injured as a result of an accident.

*Controller:* A person occupying the controlling position of a road vehicle.

*Driver:* A controller of a motor vehicle other than a motorcycle.

*Emergency vehicle:* Includes ambulance, fire brigade vehicle, police patrol car (or van) and tow truck.

*Fatal accident:* An accident for which there is at least one fatality.

*Fatality:* A person who dies within 30 days of an accident as a result of injuries received in that accident.

*Footpath:* That part of the road which is ordinarily reserved for pedestrian movement as a matter of right or custom.

*Heavy truck:* Comprised of heavy rigid truck and articulated truck.

*Heavy rigid truck:* Comprised of rigid lorry and rigid tanker with a tare weight in excess of 4.5 tonnes.

*Injured:* A person who is injured as a result of an accident, and who does not die as a result of those injuries within 30 days of the accident.

*Injury accident:* A non-fatal accident for which at least one person is injured.

*Intersection accident:* An accident for which the first impact occurs at or within 10 metres of an intersection.

*Killed:* See *Fatality*.

*Light truck:* Includes panel van (not based on car design), utility (not based on car design) and mobile vending vehicle.

*Motorcycle:* Any mechanically or electrically propelled two or three-wheeled machine with or without side-car. Includes solo motorcycle, motorcycle with sidecar, motor scooter, mini-bike, three-wheeled special mobility vehicle and moped (motorized 'pedal cycle').

*Motorcycle passenger:* A person on but not controlling a motorcycle.

*Motorcycle rider:* A person occupying the controlling position of a motorcycle.

*Motor vehicle:* Any road vehicle which is mechanically or electrically powered but not operated on rails.

*Newcastle Metropolitan Area:* Comprised of the following local government areas: Newcastle and Lake Macquarie cities.

*Non-casualty accident:* An accident for which at least one vehicle is towed away but there is no fatality or person injured.

*Passenger:* Any person, other than the controller, who is in, on, boarding, entering, alighting or falling from a road vehicle at the time of the accident, provided a portion of the person is in/on the road vehicle.

*Pedal cycle:* Any two or three-wheeled device operated solely by pedals and propelled by human power except toy vehicles or other pedestrian conveyances. Includes bicycles with side-car, trailer or training wheels attached.

*Pedal cycle passenger:* A person on but not controlling a pedal cycle.

*Pedal cycle rider:* A person occupying the controlling position of a pedal cycle.

*Pedestrian:* Any person who is not in, on, boarding, entering, alighting or falling from a road vehicle at the time of the accident.

*Pedestrian conveyance:* Any device, ordinarily operated on the footpath, by which a pedestrian may move, or by which a pedestrian may move another pedestrian or goods. Includes non-motorized scooter, pedal car, skateboard, roller skates, in-line skates, toy tricycle, unicycle, push cart, sled, trolley, non-motorized go-cart, billycart, pram, wheelbarrow, handbarrow, non-motorized wheelchair or any other toy device used as a means of mobility.

*Road:* The area devoted to public travel within a surveyed road reserve. Includes a footpath and cycle path inside the road reserve and a median strip or traffic island.

*Road vehicle:* Any device (except pedestrian conveyance) upon which or by which any person or property may be transported or drawn on a road.

*Sydney Metropolitan Area:* Comprised of the following local government areas: City of Sydney, Bankstown, Blacktown, Botany Bay, Campbelltown, Canada Bay, Canterbury, Fairfield, Holroyd, Hurstville, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith, Randwick, Rockdale, Ryde, South Sydney and Willoughby cities, Ashfield, Auburn, Baulkham Hills, Burwood, Camden, Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Kogarah, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Leichhardt, Manly, Marrickville, Mosman, North Sydney, Pittwater, Strathfield, Sutherland, Warringah, Waverley and Woollahra.

*Wollongong Metropolitan Area:* Comprised of the following local government areas: Wollongong and Shellharbour cities.

## CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING SPEEDING AND FATIGUE INVOLVEMENT

### Speeding

The identification of speeding (excessive speed for the prevailing conditions) as a contributing factor in road traffic accidents cannot always be determined directly from police reports of those accidents. Certain circumstances, however, suggest the involvement of speeding. The Roads and Traffic Authority has therefore drawn up criteria for determining whether or not an accident is to be considered as having involved speeding as a contributing factor.

Speeding is considered to have been a contributing factor to a road traffic accident if that accident involved at least one *speeding* motor vehicle.

A motor vehicle is assessed as having been *speeding* if it satisfies the conditions described below under (a) or (b) or both.

- (a) The vehicle's controller (driver or rider) was charged with a speeding offence; or  
the vehicle was described by police as travelling at excessive speed; or  
the stated speed of the vehicle was in excess of the speed limit.
- (b) The vehicle was performing a manoeuvre characteristic of excessive speed, that is:
  - while on a curve the vehicle jack-knifed, skidded, slid or the controller lost control; or
  - the vehicle ran off the road while negotiating a bend or turning a corner and the controller was not distracted by something or disadvantaged by drowsiness or sudden illness and was not swerving to avoid another vehicle, animal or object and the vehicle did not suffer equipment failure.

### Fatigue

The identification of fatigue as a contributing factor in road traffic accidents similarly cannot always be determined directly from police reports of those accidents and the following criteria are used to assess its involvement. Fatigue is considered to have been involved as a contributing factor to a road traffic accident if that accident involved at least one *fatigued* motor vehicle controller.

A motor vehicle controller is assessed as having been *fatigued* if the conditions described under (c) or (d) are satisfied together or separately.

- (c) The vehicle's controller was described by police as being asleep, drowsy or fatigued.
- (d) The vehicle performed a manoeuvre which suggested loss of concentration of the controller due to fatigue, that is
  - the vehicle travelled onto the incorrect side of a straight road and was involved in a head-on collision (and was not overtaking another vehicle and no other relevant factor was identified);
  - or
  - the vehicle ran off a straight road or off the road to the outside of a curve and the vehicle was not directly identified as travelling at excessive speed and there was no other relevant factor identified for the manoeuvre.