

# New Zealand's road safety objectives



Photo provided by NZ Police



**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

## Minister's foreword



New Zealand's road safety objectives build on the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024 (GPS 2024). GPS 2024 recognises the important role that Roads of National Significance and Roads of Regional Significance play in unlocking economic growth and improving road safety for all New Zealanders.

Motorists and freight operators should be able to travel around our road network, quickly and safely. We all have a part to play in improving road safety. While improving road safety in an efficient manner is a priority for this Government, road users also need to take personal responsibility for their actions on the road.

This road safety objectives document aims to tackle New Zealand's most challenging road safety issues. Its effectiveness will rely on everyone doing their bit. Road Controlling Authorities, the vehicle industry, and road users all play a crucial role in improving road safety. Each of us has a part to play in ensuring that our roads are safe.

Road deaths and serious injuries place a substantial burden on families, communities, the economy, and the health sector each year, with significant costs incurred by the Accident Compensation Corporation and other parties.

The Government is committed to improving road safety by targeting the highest contributing factors to fatal road crashes, including alcohol and drugs.

This document includes a range of actions across four pillars that target these contributors, focusing on safer roads, safer drivers, safer vehicles and resetting our approach to speed limits.

Some of these actions bring significant change – introducing roadside oral fluid drug testing, reviewing penalties for traffic offences, and for the first time making some funding that is available to Police dependent on the delivery of speed and alcohol road policing activities.

Investing in new and safe Roads of National Significance and increasing road policing and enforcement are priorities for the Government as these are some of the most important tools for improving safety on New Zealand's roads.

While the Government is committed to delivering efficient and cost-effective actions over the next three years, this document creates a framework that will readily accommodate future road safety actions that target the highest contributing factors in fatal road crashes by clearly setting out the principles and objectives they will be considered against.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Simeon Brown".

Hon Simeon Brown  
**Minister of Transport**

# Road safety in New Zealand

Safety is critical to a well-functioning transport system. Road deaths and serious injuries (DSIs) place a substantial burden on families, society, the economy, and the health sector each year. Road safety is a responsibility we all share, and improving road safety in an efficient manner is a priority for this Government.

The steady decline in DSI we observed between the 1980s and early 2010s has slowed over the past decade. Provisionally, there were 341 fatalities and 2,435 serious injuries from 2,359 crashes over the course of 2023.

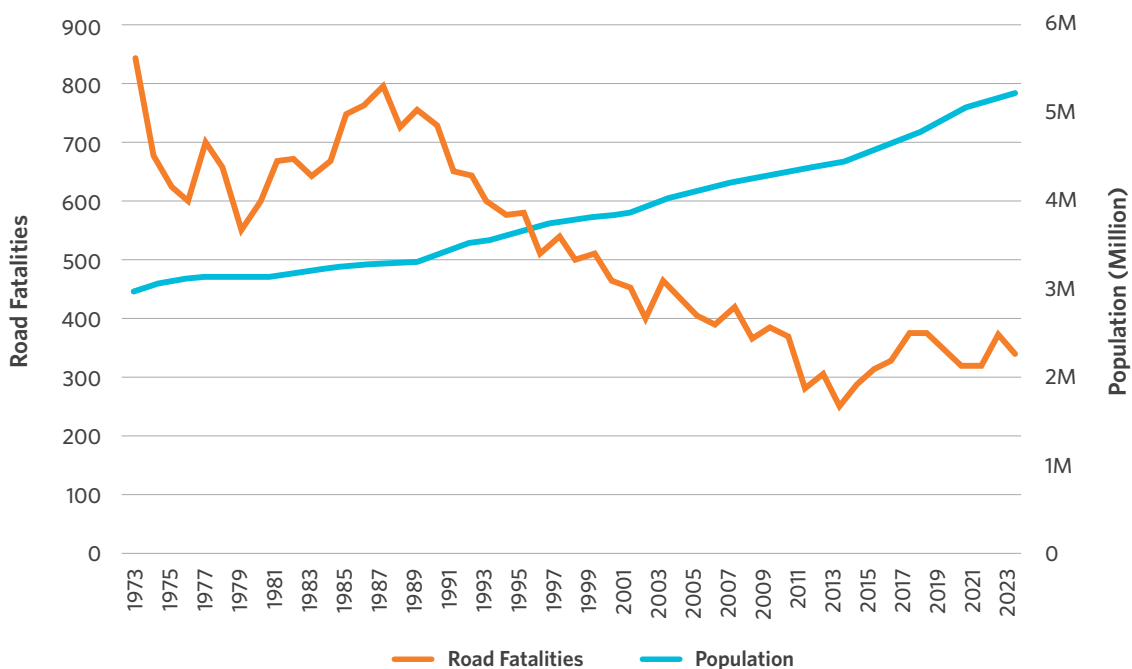
Figure 1 shows that the number of road fatalities in New Zealand has steadily declined since the late 1980s while New Zealand's population has continued to grow. This is as a result of safety improvements to the vehicle fleet, regulatory reform and the delivery of safe and new road infrastructure.

New Zealand cannot afford the growing social and economic cost of road crashes. A safe and reliable roading network will see fewer crashes, and therefore less disruption on the roading network. This will play a key part in lifting New Zealand's productivity and economic growth to improve outcomes for all New Zealanders.

## The high rates of deaths on New Zealand's roads call for a new approach to road safety

New Zealand's annual rate of road deaths per 100,000 people is higher than comparable states in Australia. In 2022, New Zealand had 7.3 road deaths per 100,000 people. With similar populations and road networks, Victoria had 4.4 road deaths per 100,000 people, and Queensland had 5.1 road deaths per 100,000 people.

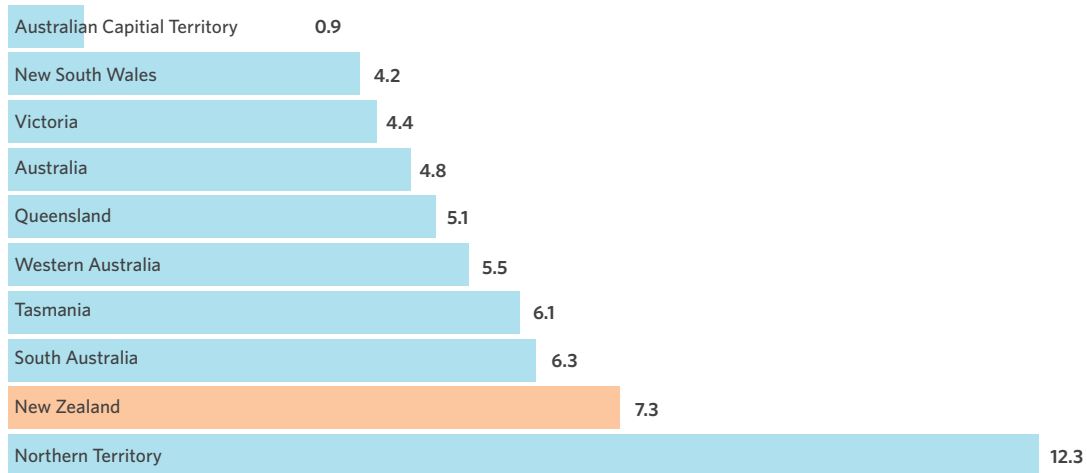
**Figure 1: Road fatalities compared to New Zealand's population growth**



Source: Ministry of Transport and Statistics New Zealand

**Figure 2: New Zealand and Australian road fatalities per 100,000 in 2022**

**Road fatalities per 100k population (2022)**



Source: IRTAD, OECD, BITRE, ABS

Figure 2 shows New Zealand's rate for road fatalities is worse than most Australian states.

## Guiding principles

A set of principles has guided the development of New Zealand's road safety objectives. These principles will be at the forefront of all decision-makers' minds when designing, implementing and choosing road safety interventions and actions.

The guiding principles are:

### Principle 1

Actions should be supported by evidence and focus on the causal factors of death and serious injury

### Principle 2

Road safety should consider the economic and social outcomes sought from the road system, including the need to get to destinations efficiently

### Principle 3

Road safety should be delivered in an efficient and cost-effective way that achieves value for money, and takes into account the regulatory burden it places on New Zealanders

### Principle 4

Road safety is everyone's responsibility - road users also have a role to play in improving road safety outcomes

### Principle 5

Actions should consider community and road user views, ensuring there is public acceptability

## The Government's approach to road safety

All New Zealanders have a part to play in improving road safety. The Government is committed to improving road safety by delivering new and safe roading infrastructure, targeting the highest contributing factors to fatal crashes through effective road policing and enforcement, and ensuring that New Zealand has an increasingly safe vehicle fleet.

The Government is rebalancing the Safe System approach, particularly around resetting the approach to speed limits, to ensure that road safety is delivered in an efficient and cost-effective manner, and that public sentiment and acceptability are considered more directly.

The Government expects there to be a greater focus on delivering safety interventions in a cost-effective way that achieves value for money and is supported by road users and local communities.

This document sets out which actions will be delivered under our four road safety objectives.

## Safer roads: lift the quality of our road infrastructure

Lifting the safety of our roads requires investment in new roads built to high safety standards, properly maintaining existing roads, and investing in proven and cost-effective enhancements to make our existing roads safer.

The Government expects that investment in road safety will be achieved across GPS 2024's funding (activity) classes. This includes investing in new Roads of National Significance and Roads of Regional Significance, filling and preventing potholes through increased resealing, rehabilitation and drainage maintenance works, and investing in the delivery and maintenance of targeted and cost-effective safety infrastructure improvements.

Safety interventions should be retrofitted on high crash areas of the network, where they provide value for money and materially improve road safety. For example, it is expected that there will be greater use of rumble strips across the state highway, local and rural road networks.

### Case study

#### **Mackays to Peka Peka Road of National Significance**

The Roads of National Significance are some of New Zealand's most successful highways and have led to significant improvements in road safety for communities across the country, reducing the number and severity of crashes.

One example of this is the Mackays to Peka Peka Road of National Significance. Since the opening of the Mackays to Peka Peka section of the Kāpiti Expressway in 2017, road fatalities in the Kāpiti District have reduced significantly.

From 2018 to 2022, four people died in crashes in the Kāpiti district, representing a 71 per cent reduction in road fatalities compared to the previous 2012 to 2016 period.

Since this Road of National Significance opened, Kāpiti has had one of the lowest rates of road fatalities in the country.

Under this objective, the Government will:

<b>Lead</b>	<b>Action</b>
NZTA	Deliver new Roads of National Significance and Roads of Regional Significance. The NZTA is expected to begin procurement, enabling works and construction on the Government's first seven Roads of National Significance <sup>1</sup> in the next three years. The remaining new Roads of National Significance are expected to start construction from the 2027-30 NLTP period.
NZTA	Increase road maintenance and renewal activities with an emphasis on potholes, pothole prevention, and a significant uplift in rehabilitation. The NZTA will be focused on achieving long-term maintenance outcomes of two per cent rehabilitation and nine per cent resurfacing every year to improve safety and reliability on the state highway network. When planning these activities, the NZTA is expected to consider complementary investment in cost effective safety treatments that target high crash areas of the state highway network and achieve value for money.
NZTA	Develop and deliver a range of innovative, cost-effective safety infrastructure measures on existing roads that target high crash areas of the network, achieve value for money, and take into account the views of affected road users and local communities.
NZTA/ACC	Continue to apply motorcycle safety-specific treatments evidenced to cost effectively reduce the risk of deaths and serious injuries occurring on high-risk routes as part of the Motorcycle High Risk Routes Programme.

<sup>1</sup> The first wave of Roads of National Significance projects can be found here: <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/planning-and-investment/roads-of-national-significance/>

# Safer drivers: ensure road users are alert, unimpaired and comply with the road rules

## Poor road user choices affect everyone on the road

Figure 3 shows an increase in deaths in crashes involving alcohol or drugs. Alcohol and drugs are the highest contributors to fatal crashes in New Zealand. According to the Crash Analysis System, in 2023 the highest contributing behavioural factors to crashes involving road deaths were alcohol and drugs.

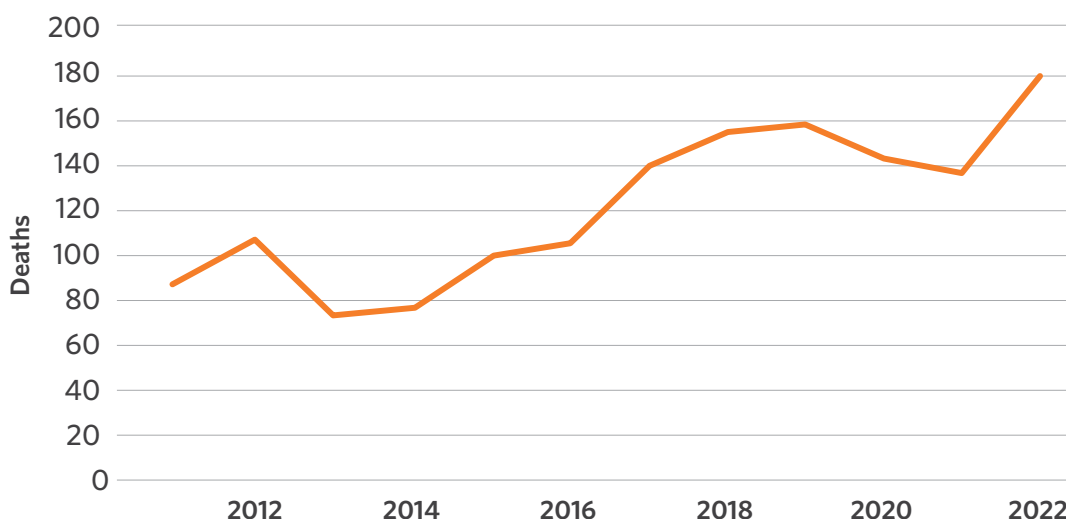
While alcohol and drugs are the leading contributors to fatal crashes in New Zealand, only 26 per cent of drivers think they are likely to be caught drug driving, and only 60 per cent of people think they are likely to be caught drink driving. Repeat offenders constitute 27 per cent of all drink-drive offenders.

Over 850,000 more alcohol breath tests were undertaken on our roads in 2023/24 compared to the previous year, saving 37 lives across the country. We know that alcohol breath testing and drug testing are incredibly effective at saving lives.

Road users need to take personal responsibility for their actions on the road to avoid road crashes. Investment towards road policing and enforcement is a priority in GPS 2024 as it is one of the most important tools for improving safety on New Zealand's roads. A Ministry of Transport report on the rate of annual road fatalities reaffirms this and found that reduced resourcing of enforcement contributed to poorer road safety outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Walton, D., Jenkins, D., Thoreau, R., Kingham, S., & Keall, M. (2020). Why is the rate of annual road fatalities increasing? A unit record analysis of New Zealand data (2010-2017). *Journal of safety research*, 72, 67-74.

**Figure 3: Deaths in crashes involving driver alcohol or drugs**



Source: Ministry of Transport

Under this objective, the Government will:

Lead	Action
<b>Increase road policing and enforcement</b>	
Police/NZTA	Deliver on road policing and enforcement targets outlined in the 2024-27 Road Policing Investment Programme focusing on seven key areas of the highest risk: impairment (from alcohol, drugs, and fatigue), speed, restraints, distraction, high-risk drivers, commercial vehicles, and other on-road prevention and enforcement activities.
<b>Implement roadside oral fluid testing</b>	
MoT	Progress legislation to enable roadside oral fluid drug testing to be enacted in early 2025.
MoT/Police	By the end of 2025, develop and pass regulations and NZ Police implement procedures.
Police	By end of 2025, operational roll out of the regime.
NZTA	Deliver public education and promotion to support the introduction of the new regime.
<b>Other key areas</b>	
NZTA	Reset the delivery of road safety promotion to ensure it is aligned with <i>New Zealand's road safety objectives</i> , nationally consistent and coordinated across central government road safety partners.
NZTA	Deliver education initiatives and public information campaigns to support New Zealand Police enforcement and encourage behavioural change, focusing on high-risk behaviours (for example, impairment, speed, distraction), and at-risk audiences (for example, school children, young drivers, motorcyclists and older people).
NZTA	Deliver and support others in their delivery of school-based road safety education, for example, walking school buses.
MoT/ACC/NZTA	Identify opportunities to improve the Graduated Driver Licensing System taking into account road safety outcomes (for example, ensuring drivers are adequately trained), alongside making a licence cheaper and easier to obtain.
NZTA	Complete the review of the NZTA Medical Aspects of Fitness to Drive to update guidance on the medical standards health practitioners use to assess people confirming their fitness to drive.
ACC/NZTA	Continue optimising engagement in evidential training and education programmes such as the Ride Forever and Drive programme, and the development of new programmes.



Lead	Action
<b>Actions for exploration in outyears</b>	
MoT	Review penalties for traffic offences.
MoT/NZTA	Investigate legislative improvements to the alcohol interlock programme to support improved road safety outcomes.
MoT/NZTA	Progress rule changes to improve safety on footpaths, shared paths and bus and cycle lanes.
MoT/NZTA/ACC	Continue to explore initiatives to improve the disproportionate outcomes for some groups in New Zealand (including young people, rural residents, and motorcyclists).

## The Road Policing Investment Programme (RPIP)

The RPIP is funding the NZ Police a record \$1.335 billion over three years from 2024-27 to deliver road policing and enforcement activities, reflecting the Government's commitment to improving road safety. The RPIP 2024-27 represents a step change from the previous programme by explicitly linking road policing activities to intermediate and long-term outcomes and consolidating Police focus on seven key areas of highest risk.

This significant investment from the NLTF is made in recognition that road policing and enforcement is one of the most important tools for improving safety on New Zealand's roads. For the first time, \$72 million of funding that is available to Police is dependent on delivery of speed and alcohol road policing activities.

The RPIP includes targeting:

- 3.3 million passive breath tests and breath screening tests conducted per year
  - » 2.145 million passive breath tests and breath screening tests conducted in high and extreme alcohol risk times per year
- 50,000 roadside oral fluid drug tests per annum from first year of implementation per year
- 60,000 restraint offences per year
- 40,000 cell phone offences
- 430,000 officer issued speed offences per year
  - » officer issued speed offences under 11km/h over the speed limit
    - 2024: 64,500
    - 2025: 75,250
    - 2026: 86,000
  - » 301,000 officer issued speed offence notices on open roads.

# Safer vehicles: Improve the safety performance of our vehicle fleet

The design and safety features of our vehicles matter. Safer vehicles not only help drivers avoid crashes, but also protect occupants and other road users when crashes do happen.

Vehicles with high safety performance and features are designed to absorb the impacts of a crash and protect people from death or serious injury (DSI). Increasingly, they are also built with active safety features to reduce the chances of a crash occurring in the first place. Improving access to safer vehicles drives better outcomes as vehicle safety contributes to the survivability of most crashes.

As shown in figure 4 below, as at December 2022, 35 per cent of the 4.3 million light vehicles in the fleet have 1 or 2-star safety ratings and were involved in 46 per cent of DSI crashes. Similarly, 4-star and 5-star vehicles make up 41 per cent of the fleet but were only involved in 27 per cent of DSI crashes. Drivers in a one-star vehicle are 90 per cent more likely to die or sustain a serious injury in a crash than they would if they had been driving a five-star vehicle.

Improving heavy vehicle safety is also important and involves the monitoring of several different heavy vehicle operation elements. These include driver impairment from fatigue, drugs and alcohol, and from a vehicle perspective, weight and safety critical components like brake and tyre condition.

**Figure 4: Light vehicles involved in DSI crashes 2019 to 2023 by star rating**

<b>Star (crashworthiness rating)</b>	<b>Percentage of fleet (as at 2022)</b>	<b>Percentage of DSI (2019-2023)</b>
1 star	20%	26%
2 star	15%	20%
3 star	24%	27%
4 star	19%	16%
5 star	22%	11%

Source: NZTA

Lead	Action
MoT/NZTA	Review the vehicle regulatory system to enable better management of the safety performance of the vehicle fleet, reduce regulatory burden, and ensure our domestic rules are fit for purpose.
MoT/NZTA	Investigate our warrant of fitness and certificate of fitness systems to ensure that they more effectively and efficiently target risk and are fit for purpose for the vehicle being tested.
MoT/NZTA	<p>Investigate new, targeted safety requirements for light and heavy vehicles entering the fleet to improve safety performance over the medium term, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ automatic emergency braking</li> <li>▪ lane keep support systems</li> <li>▪ electronic stability control (for heavy vehicles including buses).</li> </ul>
NZTA	Continue to increase awareness of the importance of safe vehicles including better understanding of safety ratings and encouraging consumers to purchase the highest safety rated vehicle they can.
NZTA	<p>Commence building of nationwide Commercial Vehicle Safety Centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ three in 2025</li> <li>▪ three in 2026</li> <li>▪ consider funding for four more by 2026, with completed builds in outyears.</li> </ul>

# Resetting speed: a balanced and targeted approach to speed limits

According to the NZTA's Public Attitudes to Road Safety, seven in ten New Zealanders agree that enforcing speed limits helps to reduce road deaths. The majority of New Zealanders agree that safety cameras are effective for reducing the number of people driving over the speed limit. According to preliminary findings from a NZTA national speed survey, in 2023, 26 per cent of people exceeded the speed limit on roads that had a speed limit of 100km/h. Similarly, roads with a speed limit of 50km/h, 28 per cent of people exceeded the speed limit. Speeding – exceeding the legal speed limit – is estimated to contribute to around 60 per cent of fatal crashes in New Zealand.

Speed enforcement has been shown to be effective at reducing speeding, road crashes, and ultimately the severity of crashes. Speed enforcement is particularly effective when it is undertaken in combination with road safety promotion, and awareness raising campaigns.

The highest income countries that have the lowest rates of road deaths (Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Japan and Denmark) all have speed limits of 50 kilometres per hour or more on urban roads<sup>1</sup>, with exceptions for lower speed limits.

The Government is rebalancing how it deals with the setting of speed limits and moving away from the previous government's blanket speed limit reductions. This means taking a more targeted approach to speed limit changes considering safety, economic impacts – including travel times – and community views. It is also prioritising the safety of young New Zealanders arriving at or leaving school by implementing variable speed limits outside school gates at pick up and drop off times.

1. European Commission, Government of Iceland and Government of Japan.

Under this objective, the Government will:

Lead	Action
MoT	Enact the Land Transport Rule: Setting of Speed Limits 2024.
RCAs/NZTA	Implement speed limits reversals by 1 July 2025.
RCAs/NZTA	Implement variable speed limits outside school gates by 1 July 2026.
NZTA/Police	Complete the transfer of the existing speed camera function from NZ Police to NZTA by 30 June 2025.
NZTA	Complete the rollout of speed camera signs on fixed speed cameras by June 2025.
Actions for exploration in outyears	
NZTA	Investigate measures to increase the effectiveness, including optimal risk-targeting, of fixed and mobile speed cameras.
NZTA	Investigate an expansion of the speed camera network.

## Supporting action: enabling third-party funding

The Government expects that NZTA will make efforts to reduce barriers for third-party investment into road safety, including enabling third-party and market-based funding and delivery of safety initiatives and research. The cost to ACC of new claims related to road crashes is estimated to be around \$857 million each year. ACC currently has an outstanding claims liability of \$12 billion for road crashes and is still contributing to the recovery costs of people injured in 1974, the first year of the ACC scheme. Better road safety can help to reduce such costs.

The Government expects that the NZTA will make efforts to facilitate greater contributions from ACC to investments which improve road safety and meet ACC's injury prevention investment criteria.

There are examples of investments made by ACC, including investment in the Transmission Gully Road of National Significance and in motorcycle safety. The Government expects to see this approach extended further in all areas where investment by ACC will result in safety improvements that meet ACC's statutory criteria for investment.

Under this action, the Government will:

Lead	Action
ACC/NZTA	NZTA to work with ACC to identify options to increase use of ACC injury prevention funding for road safety initiatives, including considering investment in infrastructure, driving training and promotion activities.

# Roles and responsibilities

This section describes the roles and responsibilities of each of the departments and key stakeholders in the land transport system who have an interest in road safety.

## Minister of Transport

The Minister of Transport sets the strategic direction for improving road safety in New Zealand and has the primary role in establishing the laws, regulations and rules that govern behaviour on the roads. The Minister of Transport is also responsible for the NZTA.

Other Ministers, such as the Minister of Police, play key roles in the delivery of road safety in New Zealand.

## Ministry of Transport

As the Minister of Transport's main policy adviser, the Ministry of Transport provides advice to the Minister of Transport on setting the strategic direction of road safety in New Zealand and on the regulation and other interventions needed to achieve his priorities.

## NZ Transport Agency

NZTA is the main regulator of road safety in New Zealand and is also the key funder of our road networks. In accordance with the Land Transport (NZTA) Legislation Amendment Act 2020, NZTA has established a Director of Land Transport position. The Act provides the Director with certain functions, powers and duties in relation to regulatory matters, including monitoring how the land transport system complies with a variety of legislation. NZTA also operates the State highway network and funds and monitors road policing activity funded out of the NLTF. NZTA's direct enforcement role is expanding as it takes over responsibility for speed cameras from the Police.

## NZ Police

The NZ Police has the main responsibility for enforcing road rules and regulations. The NZ Police plays a significant role in ensuring compliance with road rules to achieve road safety outcomes.

## Accident Compensation Corporation

ACC is responsible for the direct costs of road trauma through New Zealand's no-fault accident compensation scheme. ACC invests in interventions designed to reduce the cost of road trauma claims, and when injuries do occur, provides support and rehabilitation to help injured people recover.

## Local Government

Local government owns and maintains approximately 80 per cent of New Zealand's roading network and is also an advocate for road safety in local communities.

## Private sector

The private sector owns and operates many of the vehicles that operate on our roads regularly, including trucks. As employers of many New Zealanders that rely on the roads for their income, often owning large fleets, the private sector has a large responsibility for road safety in New Zealand.

## Monitoring and reporting

The Ministry of Transport, working with other Government road safety partners, will be accountable to the Minister of Transport for monitoring road safety outcomes and the delivery of road safety actions. It is expected that quarterly monitoring will be developed to ensure performance and delivery remains on track.