	To:	Transport & Health Policy Makers, & Practitioners
	From:	Prof Adrian Davis, TRI, Edinburgh Napier University
	Date:	4th January 2022
	Subject:	Essential Evidence 4 Scotland No.47 Lessons in Safe Systems Road Safety from Victoria, Australia

Top Line: A clearly articulated shared understanding of what Safe System seeks to achieve is required for integration into public policy and strategy.

Safe Systems has been the dominant approach to road safety in Victoria, Australia, for over fifteen years, guiding the development and implementation of policy. Internationally, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognised Safe System as road safety best practice in 2008. The OECD, World Bank and World Health Organisation (WHO) encourage all nations to follow Safe System and many nations have and continue to implement Safe System principles.[1] In spite of Australia having adopted Safe System 16 years ago, the forecasted reductions in the road toll and other key indicators have not been met.

There have been reports of a lack of will to pursue the changes required to adopt Safe System within Australia,[2] and that the implementation challenges of Safe System are political and social, rather than technical.[3] Whilst these challenges could be overcome, research has identified that all Australian jurisdictions examined interpreted Safe System differently and seek to apply it in different environments.[4]

Table 1
Research topic guide.

Topic/Theme	Explanation
What is Safe System?	Defining the concept
Development of Safe System: How and why	History of Safe System and its impetus
Vision Zero, Sustainable Safety and Safe System	Comparison between the three concepts
Implementation in Victoria	How Safe System was applied
Changes in Safe System	Evolution of Safe System
Key successes and failures of Safe System	Implementation accomplishments and failures

Using semi-structured interviews with experts in the field researchers at Monash University working with the State Government aimed to describe the intentions of Safe Systems in Victoria, and analyse how well this aligns with models of successful public policy.[5] Results were analysed using the interview questions as themes, as per Table 1. Study conclusions included that: From a process perspective, Safe System had successfully identified the root cause of the road safety problem. Yet a systematic review and analysis of policy options did not occur, with Safe System becoming the singular method for addressing fatal and serious injuries in Victoria. While the strategy and policy development phases had some successes in highlighting a vision for road safety, it was significantly limited by not having a shared, consistent understanding of how Safe System is to be actioned despite widespread endorsement of Safe System policy.

The programmatic assessment identified that Safe System has not been evaluated. The purpose of Safe System remained unclear, stemming from multiple, differing perspectives on the intended intentions, outcomes and objectives. There is political commitment as evidenced by the adoption of Safe System in road safety strategies, however, the generalised description of Safe System can also be used to appeal to differing audiences without committing to a singular course of action. Community support for Safe. System is more mixed with acceptance of a forgiving road safety system but a continued reliance on the attributions of blame. In part this is explained through poor engagement and a reluctance in some parts of government to adopt Safe System, resulting in limited legitimacy towards Safe System.

[1] International Transport Forum, 2008. Towards Zero Ambitious Road Safety Targets and the Safe System Approach, Paris: OECD.

[2] Woolley, J., Crozier, J. 2018. Inquiry into the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020, 2018.

[3] Muir, C., I. Johnston, I., Howard. E. 2018 Evolution of a holistic systems approach to planning and managing road safety: the Victorian case study, 1970–2015, *Injury Prevention*, 24 (Suppl. 1) i19.

[4] L. Mooren, R. Grzebieta, S. Job, 2011 Safe System - Comparisons of this Approach in Australia, Australasian College of Road Safety Conference. Victoria, Australia.

[5] Green, M. et al, in Press. Safe System in road safety public policy: A case study from Victoria, Australia, *IATSS Research*,