

# Auckland Transport awarded for groundbreaking 'safe speeds' programme

Jordan Smith

In 2017, Auckland Transport's (AT) Head of Road Safety Engineering, Michael Brown said they had recognised a "real issue" with deaths and serious injuries on their roads. A 70% increase of both categories since 2014 confirmed the issue.

Instead of providing excuses, Brown and his team acted, introducing the 'safe speeds' programme in 2020.

The programme centred around lowering road speeds and setting more appropriate limits, initially starting on rural roads and reducing speeds in the City Centre.

The results speak for themselves.

"[On] higher speed, rural roads... we've had really, really good stats on the reductions on deaths and serious injuries," Brown said.

Brown went on to explain that past those initial tinkers in the rural sectors, AT worked on creating safer spaces for pedestrians and cyclists in town centres, residential areas and around schools.

"It would mean that kids are more likely to walk to school, or the parents would feel more comfortable with the kids walking to school," he said.

"You see an uplift in that number of people walking and cycling and the perception of safety was also increased."

In the present, the stats now paint a far more positive picture. Crash data suggests the programme led to a 33% decrease in fatal crashes, 13% decrease of death and serious injury crashes and an 18% reduction of all injuries in general.

"Deservingly, Brown and the AT team were awarded with the National Award for Road Safety in 2024. The recognition acknowledges organisations and industry professionals alike on work that improves road user safety through excellent practice, design or technical application, making AT a prime candidate.

"We've always talked about being able to tell a story and being able to get recognition for what we've done. It really gave the team the courage or the confidence to keep pushing forward as much as they can... it was awesome," Brown said.

"It kind of gives you the sense of 'yeah, we're doing the right thing', so it was a really timely award."

Brown alluded to the importance of having these style of awards, as it actively shows the New Zealand public positive work being done in the sector.



Michael Brown, Head of Road Safety Engineering at Auckland Transport. Photograph supplied by Auckland Transport

## **Brown and Auckland Transport have made strides in ensuring Auckland road user's safety**

"There's a lot of people in New Zealand [who] want the best for the communities, and they want the communities to be safer... they want to see an improvement in road safety."

"Having this recognition at a national level to say, 'this team is doing the right thing and they're in the right direction', it really helps your case."

Brown said he would be "very supportive" of nominating individuals, teams and organisations alike for the award, as the importance of lifting one another up cannot be understated.

"That whole sense of celebrating success is really, really key to having high performing teams and making sure people are really committed to what they want to do."

Looking forward, Brown said he and his team will be working with elected member to develop local board road safety plans going forward, with a focus on speed management, road safety infrastructure and road safety education.

"It's going to be more tailored to where people are wanting to make changes," he said. "We're going to do road safety with the community as opposed to doing road safety to the community."