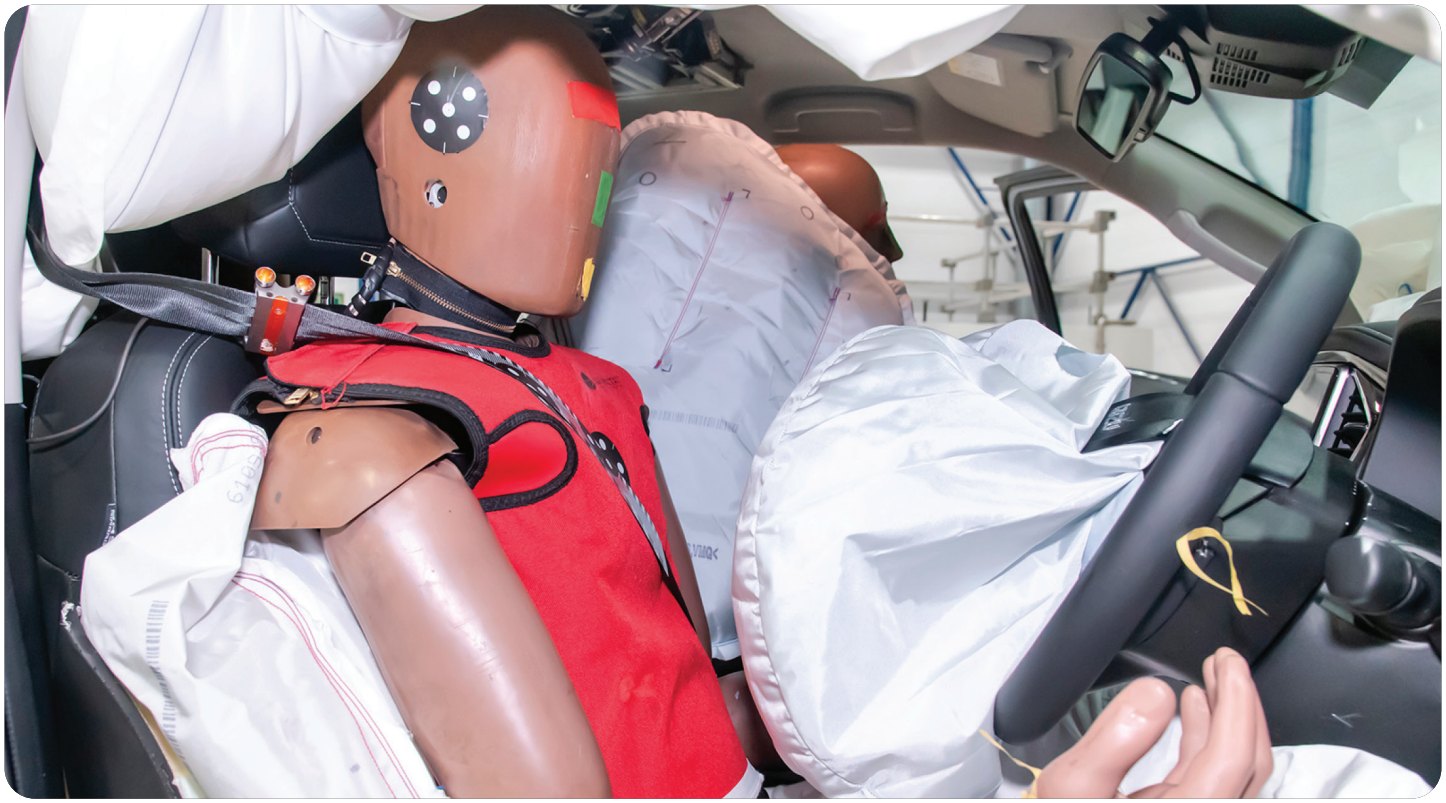
AT A GLANCE

What's new from 2026?

ANCAP SAFETY



Vehicle safety continues to evolve, and so does our testing.

At ANCAP SAFETY, **we crash cars so you don't have to**.

Every star rating we award helps you choose a car that protects what matters most – you, your passengers, and everyone else who shares the road.

Whether you're the kind of person who simply checks the headline star rating, or the one who loves diving into the details, we've got you covered.

From 2026, we're stepping things up **for a safer future**.

Our vehicle safety experts have listened and reshaped our test and rating approach - giving you clarity and driving manufacturers to deliver safer cars with greater real-world benefits.

Our goal remains focussed: **helping you stay safe, every drive**.

So here's a snapshot of **what's new from 2026** (and... what's staying the same).

Fact Sheet

The more people we can keep in the *Safe Driving* stage, the fewer lives are lost.

The Stages of Safety

We've been testing and rating cars against **four pillars** of assessment since 2018. The four-pillar approach continues from 2026, with revised categories designed to better reflect the **Stages of Safety.**

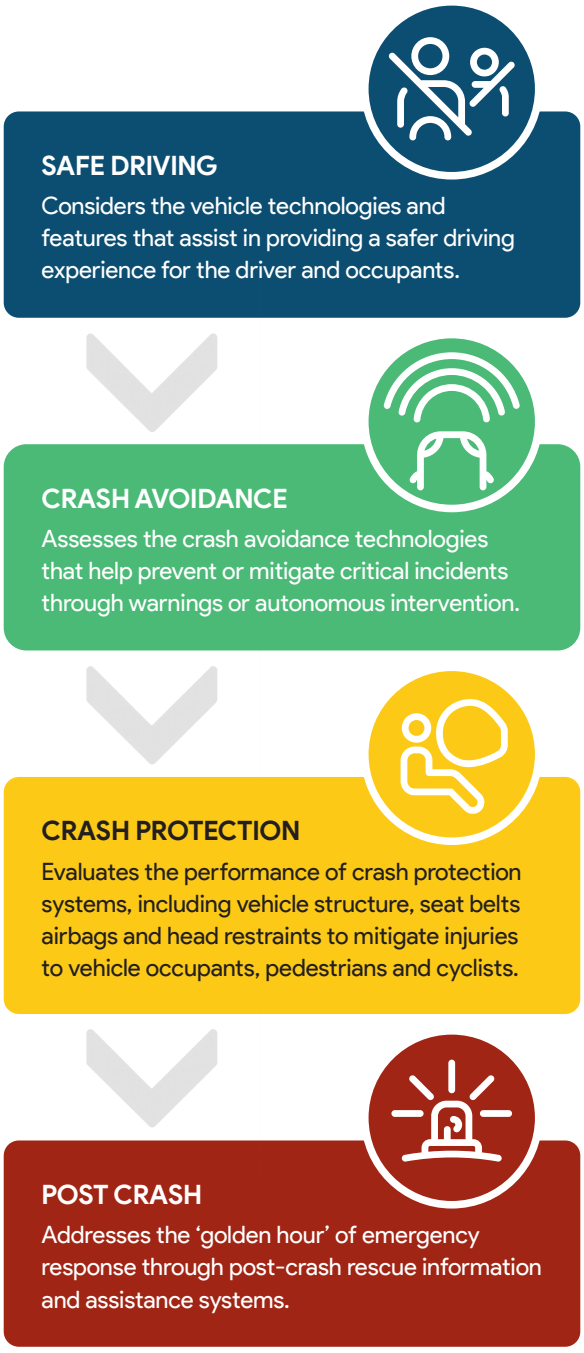
The stages of assessment are based on the Haddon Injury Prevention Matrix – a tool used in safety and injury prevention that helps us think about:

What happens **before** a crash	What happens **during** a crash	What happens **after** a crash

STAGES OF SAFETY

Nobody wants to have a crash, so we're working to encourage safety features that **reduce** the chance of a crash occurring. And if a crash does happen, how the car can better **protect you**.

We're also thinking ahead with these **new generation** protocols - building towards a more automated driving future. A safety rating framework that supports and evolves with this encourages **safety by design**.



Crash protection fundamentals

Don't worry... We will never stray away from the **traditional elements** of vehicle safety – cabin structure, crumple zones, airbags, seat belts. The *Crash Protection* stage will continue to carry the most significance.

What we are doing is adding different **dummies** and a broader range of assessment **speeds** and **configurations** - to see our star ratings cater for a broader range of crashes and more realistic crash outcomes that happen in the real-world.

And, if you're familiar with our colour-coding that shows where our dummies 'hurt' the most, we've introduced a rule where any **red critical body region** will see the vehicle's safety rating restricted to no higher than four stars.[i]

FULL WIDTH FRONTAL TEST

A new deformable crash barrier (the part that simulates an opposing vehicle) replaces the rigid wall. This will tell us more about the timing of airbag deployments in real-world crashes and reduce the possibility of airbag deployment being optimised for just one crash scenario.

The driver dummy and the dummy seated in the rear passenger seat both remain small adult females, but we have added a third dummy – the THOR adult male – to the front passenger seat.

FRONTAL OFFSET TEST

Our 'two adults & two kids' family remains used in this test, but instead of the Hybrid III 50th percentile adult male dummy that used to sit in the front passenger seat, we've replaced it with a small adult female dummy (5th percentile).

WHIPLASH TEST

The level of whiplash protection provided by a vehicle's headrest will be improved for smaller occupants, with an additional test added to our rear impact assessment.

ROLLOVER PROTECTION

Almost all new cars provide reasonably good levels of roof strength, but from 2026, manufacturers need to demonstrate that curtain airbags remain inflated for a sufficient amount of time, and cover the appropriate areas of the cabin, to provide adequate protection in a rollover.

All other existing crash tests continue, and their results further enhanced with **sled tests** and **virtual simulations** to improve performance robustness and diversity. Points will also be scored for airbags and seat belts that can adapt to occupants of different sizes and seating positions.

Physical buttons

If you've noticed that some new cars have the most basic driver controls **buried** within touchscreens and sub-menus, you're not alone.

It's time to **bring back buttons** and stalks and remove some of the complication (and distraction!).

From 2026, we're asking car makers to either offer **physical buttons** for important driver controls like the horn, indicators, hazard lights, windscreen wipers and headlights, or dedicate a fixed portion of the cabin display screen to these primary driving functions.

Electric door handles

Closely related to the need for tactile driver controls, we're asking that cars with electric door handles – those powered by the cars' 12 volt auxiliary battery – provide the ability for **all side door handles** to be in the extended/ready-to-open position immediately after a crash.

They'll also need to remain operable from the inside, or provide a manual override, so that occupants can exit, or first-responders can gain access inside the vehicle after a crash.

Pedal misapplication

Unfortunately there are instances where drivers have **unintentionally pressed the accelerator** pedal instead of the brake. The consequences can be fatal.

From 2026, our assessment criteria will consider smart systems that monitor pedal inputs together with information from crash avoidance cameras and sensors that detect pedestrians, vehicles, cyclists, or motorcyclists.

If the vehicle can interpret these combined inputs to recognise a potential danger and automatically reduce acceleration - whether moving forward or in reverse - points will be scored.

Driver engagement

The aim of this assessment is to reward well-designed systems that link the driver's state to the vehicle's crash avoidance features. When implemented properly, driver monitoring should **support** the driver - not irritate them.

Some **driver monitoring systems** have put their drivers offside. They beep too loud or too often. The car shouldn't add to distraction (or frustration). If the car knows you're attentive it should leave you alone – no beeps, no distractions.

On the other hand, if the car can tell you are **distracted**, **fatigued** or **impaired**, its crash avoidance features should step in to assist.

That's what we're doing with forward collision warning (FCW), driver monitoring (DMS), autonomous emergency braking (AEB), and lane support systems (LSS).

We're encouraging smart coupling so the sensitivity (occurrence and severity) of the systems is enhanced – or minimised – depending on how engaged the driver is. We call this Driver State Link.

It's a little-known fact that the manufacturer can **choose** whether an audible, haptic or visual driver monitoring warning is given, rather than ANCAP. For distraction, it is perfectly acceptable to have the steering wheel vibrate instead of an audible alarm.

ADAS robustness

We took a big leap from 2018 to build a range of crash avoidance tests into our star rating regime. We then built on these in 2020, and again in 2023.

Can your car detect and conduct an emergency stop for another car in front? Can it avoid a crash with a pedestrian that walks out from behind a parked car? Can it stop you turning into the path of a passing cyclist? You might not know, but we do.

It isn't a box-ticking exercise. We have been out on the test track physically testing the actual **performance** and **effectiveness** of crash avoidance systems – known in the safety business as **ADAS** – since 2018.

From 2026, we want to know a little more. Will the AEB system fitted to your car allow it to stop for someone wearing different clothes or a high-vis vest? What about at night? When it's raining? These aspects will be examined as we add 'robustness layers' to our ADAS assessments.

...because crash avoidance features should work in real-world conditions, not just lab conditions.

Better lane support

If you've driven a car with lane-keeping technology and didn't realise, you're on a winner!

Lane support systems shouldn't be intrusive or obvious. They should work cooperatively with the driver - intervening to help avoid that side-swipe, run-off-road, or potential head-on crash.

Some cars, unfortunately, haven't yet perfected the recipe. So we're publishing the list of ingredients needed to help manufacturers introduce systems that balance good **performance** with a good **driving experience.**

Insights from our research into lane support systems have been written in to our test and rating criteria from 2026. Cars will be assessed against metrics that show:

- How quickly the car's steering reacts when lane support kicks in
- How much steering input the driver needs to override an unwanted vehicle response
- The time taken for the driver to re-gain full steering control over the vehicle's intervention
- How much, and how aggressive or gently, the car shifts left or right when the system is activated

We're also taking each car we rate out on public roads to conduct **on-road driving assessments**, capturing real-world feedback to further enhance our approach.

Speed sign recognition accuracy forms part of the on-road driving assessment, and all the data we capture out on our urban and regional drives will be provided to the manufacturer so they can improve their systems.

Managing fire risk

In recent years, an increasing number of **hybrid** and **electric vehicles** have joined our roads.

In fact, 23% of new cars sold in Australia in 2024 had a battery-powered powertrain[ii]

These new-energy vehicles bring with them new potential risks, so from 2026 our star ratings look at **energy management** in, and after, a crash.

As part of our star rating assessment, we will examine whether:

- A disturbed high-voltage battery is able to avoid propagating into a fire within set periods of time (20 minutes, 40 minutes and 90 minutes)
- Fire risk is able to be communicated to the driver after a crash
- A warning notification can be shared with the driver if a battery fire commences during **charging** (dashboard display or via phone app)

Did you know?

23%

of new cars new cars sold in Australia in 2024 had a battery-powered powertrain[ii]

eCall

As part of our Post Crash assessment– where we focus on what can happen in the **golden hour** of survival once a crash has occurred – we're encouraging manufacturers to offer emergency call functionality, or **eCall**, to their vehicles.

Many manufacturers already offer this automatic crash notification for a set number of years after a new car is purchased, and we want to see this become more readily available across models, as well as offer first responders with more detail about each crash.

All of this information means the first responders know what they're facing before they arrive at the crash scene, and therefore, who to treat first – for the greatest chance of survivability.

You don't even need to make a phone call... The car triggers the call, providing this information instantly upon impact.

- **Where did the crash occur?** Through GPS coordinates
- **What type of crash occurred?** Through the car's crash sensors
- **What was the velocity, or severity, of the crash?** Though accelerometers already fitted to the car
- **How many occupants were in the car? Where were they seated, and were they wearing seat belts?** Through the car's seat and seatbelt-based sensors

Scoring

The new ***Stages of Safety*** approach allow us to enhance **existing** tests and incorporate **new** areas of focus.

How each element is scored has also been adjusted, and to keep things simple, each of the four assessment stages will be scored out of **100 points** – displayed as a percentage.

Minimum percentage **thresholds** continue to apply for each stage and be used to determine the overall star rating.

SAFE DRIVING

Considers the vehicle technologies and features that assist in providing a safer driving experience for the driver and occupants

OCCUPANT MONITORING
Seatbelt usage
Occupant classification
Occupant presence

DRIVER ENGAGEMENT
Driver monitoring
Driver controls

VEHICLE ASSISTANCE
Speed assistance
Adaptive cruise control
Steering assistance

100 points

CRASH AVOIDANCE

Assesses the crash avoidance technologies that help prevent or mitigate critical incidents through warnings or autonomous intervention

FRONTAL COLLISIONS
Car & motorcycle
Pedestrian & cyclist

LANE DEPARTURE COLLISIONS
Lane departure
Car & motorcycle

LOW SPEED COLLISIONS
Car & motorcycle
Pedestrian & cyclist

100 points

CRASH PROTECTION

Evaluates the performance of crash protection systems, including vehicle structure, seat belts, airbags and head restraints to mitigate injuries to vehicle occupants, pedestrians and cyclists

FRONTAL IMPACT
Frontal offset
Full width
Virtual testing & sled

SIDE IMPACT
Side impact
Oblique pole
Farside

REAR IMPACT

VULNERABLE ROAD USER IMPACT
Head Impact
Pelvis & leg impact

100 points

POST CRASH

Addresses the 'golden hour' of emergency response through post-crash rescue information and assistance systems

RESCUE INFORMATION
Rescue sheets
Rescue guide

POST CRASH INTERVENTION
Advance eCall
Multi-collision brake

VEHICLE EXTRICATION
Energy management
Occupant extrication

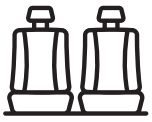
100 points

ANCAP SAFETY
TESTED 2026 ★★★★★

Fact Sheet

Other Fun Facts

1



If the seat or seat rails fail in a crash test, an automatic **50% loss of points** per test will apply to the *Crash Protection* score.

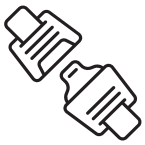
2

The motorcycle will be **added** to the T-bone *Crash Avoidance* test (AEB Junction).

3

We're introducing a new **pothole test.** We'll drive the test car toward a simulated pothole to see how well it detects the hazard and supports the driver in maintaining control when faced with sudden road surface irregularities.

4



Cars will be **examined and scored** for their ability to detect and alert for seatbelt routing and misuse scenarios.

5

Passenger's feet on the dashboard? If the airbag deploys injury can be severe. Cars will **score points** for alerting and adjusting airbag deployment based on occupant position.

6

Around 15% of all road deaths involve **pedestrians**, so we'll be rewarding cars with better-protected A-pillars - the parts beside the windscreen. Cars will need to demonstrate effective protection at 20, 30 and 40 km/h.

[i] A vehicle that meets the balance criteria for an overall five-star rating cannot have any red body region, after modifiers (penalties) are applied. In the case of a red body region, the vehicle will be limited to a maximum star rating of four stars.

[ii] 23.6% of new light passenger cars sold in Australia in 2024 were battery electric, PHEV or hybrid vehicles (https://www.mynrma.com.au/open-road/news/2025/car-sales-wrap-2024).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