

CONCEPT & FEASIBILITY REVIEW · SAMPLE

Can we rank Australia's roads by kangaroo encounters?

Excerpt from my review of an example campaign brief for the data team of an Australian agency, August 2026. They asked me to find the problems, judge whether the study was feasible in 15 analyst hours and suggest a better approach. No data was analysed at this stage.

Revise, then proceed.

Change the scope, the unit of analysis and the headline claim. Run a New South Wales pilot. Report recorded strike rates, not a driver's chance of hitting a kangaroo.

Three problems in the brief

1. "Encounter" was not defined

Seeing a kangaroo, a kangaroo crossing the road and a collision are three different stories. I defined it as an eligible recorded collision between a kangaroo and a vehicle.

2. The index measured reporting, not risk

Multiplying sighting records by traffic volume mostly shows where people report more. A journalist could take that apart in one question. A more defensible starting measure is recorded strikes per 100 million vehicle-kilometres, subject to checks on coverage and reporting differences.

3. A national ranking was not comparable

I found no comparable national public dataset. Each state uses different definitions and systems. Joining eight of them is not possible in 15 hours. And AAMI and NRMA already publish hotspot rankings from insurance claims, so a new ranking has to add something: an open, public-data method that adjusts for traffic.

The rework

Transport for NSW publishes one Animal Vehicle Strike dataset from 2021. It combines BioNet, police crash, road-maintenance, iNaturalist and IFAW records. I treat each source as a different way of observing, not five interchangeable samples.

Recorded strike rate = eligible recorded strikes ÷ vehicle-kilometres × 100 million

Vehicle-kilometres = average annual daily traffic × 365 × road-segment length (km)

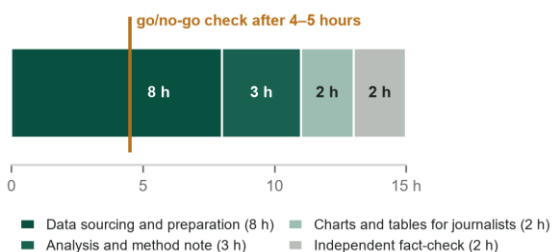
- Fix the road units **before** seeing any result, so nobody can pick the boundaries that give the best headline.
- Write down how many strikes a road needs to qualify. A top road must stay on top if that rule changes slightly.
- Licence catch: the portal says CC BY, but the metadata licenses the iNaturalist records CC BY-NC 4.0. Check before a commercial client publishes.

The story it gives the team

The news is the gap between raw counts and traffic-adjusted rates. That gives a state headline, a ranked chart, a map and regional versions for local media. If the evidence is weak, publish the feasibility finding instead. That can be a policy story in itself.

The outcome for the agency

A 15-hour plan, with a checkpoint that can save up to 10 hours



- **Saves time.** A go/no-go check after 4–5 hours, before up to 10 more hours are spent.
- **Saves money.** Scope cut to one state that the 15-hour budget can deliver.
- **Protects credibility.** The journalist's first question, "is this risk or just where people report more?", is answered before pitching.
- **Reduces legal risk.** A non-commercial data licence is flagged before the client publishes.
- **Finds a new angle.** Raw counts against traffic-adjusted rates, which insurance-based rankings do not show.
- **Keeps a fallback.** If the data is weak, the feasibility finding can run as a policy story.
- **Gives the client something to read.** A written decision with reasons, ready to forward.

Result: the agency was pleased and accepted my verdict.

Sources named in the review: [Transport for NSW, Animal Vehicle Strike dataset and metadata](#); [Transport for NSW, NSW Roads Traffic Volume Counts API](#). Adapted and shortened from the three-page review. The brief was an example exercise, not a live client campaign.