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Submission – Road Safety

Introduction

Victoria Walks' interest in this inquiry relates to our concern for people killed and injured while walking on the road network. Walking is a near universal mode of transport and used by almost everyone, even if only to get between a car and destination. However, when people walk they are the most vulnerable people on the road. In Australia, the downward trend in road deaths over the decade has been more pronounced for people in vehicles than pedestrians. The number and proportion of older pedestrians killed has steadily increased over the last 10 years. This means that to reduce the number of road deaths, the safety of pedestrians needs to be prioritised.

Summary

Key points Victoria Walks would like to see addressed by the Committee include:

- **New vehicles safety standards**. As recently as last year, there were new vehicles available for purchase which received a safety rating of one star out of a possible five, with some rating particularly badly for pedestrian safety. There have been 249 vehicles since 2000 awarded only one star, however many of these vehicles are still on the roads today and available for purchase second hand.
- **Regulation of the sale of other vehicles**. Currently, a person can purchase an electric scooter (e-scooter) that cannot be used on any public infrastructure such as a road or footpath in most states of Australia. The road rules are defined at state level, but the ability for retailers to sell products which are effectively illegal for use is a federal issue.
- **Maintaining footpaths for feet.** The footpath should be a place where people feel safe and comfortable to walk. This is particularly important for the most vulnerable pedestrians; older people and those with a disability. Allowing vehicles capable of high speeds like bicycles and e-scooters to use the footpath compromises actual and perceived pedestrian safety.
- **Federal funding for walking infrastructure**. The federal government acknowledge that they have a part to play in encouraging and supporting active travel but do not currently provide any funding specifically for walking infrastructure.

Recommendations

These are Victoria Walks' priorities for reducing the number of people killed and injured on our roads, particularly the most vulnerable. They are framed around the terms of reference of the inquiry.

In relation to the effectiveness of existing road safety support services and programs, including opportunities to integrate Safe System principles into health, education, industry and transport policy, Victoria Walks recommends the Australian Government:

- Invest in road improvements that increase pedestrian safety.
- Update guidelines so that design reflects priority, particularly at crossing points and intersections to improve pedestrian safety and priority.
- Prohibit vehicles capable of higher speeds like bicycles and e-scooters on the footpath, to protect pedestrians' actual and perceived safety.
- Ensure e-scooters and other personal mobility devices not able to be used legally in public space across most of Australia are not available for importation and purchase.
- Support efforts by local and state governments to reduce speed limits, including default urban speed limits in residential areas and arterial roads limits.
- Review new vehicles safety standards so that vehicles which pose significant risks to vulnerable road users are not available for importation or sale.
- Invest in modal shift from driving to walking, cycling and using public transport to improve safety of all road users.
- Increase investment in public transport.
- Avoid creating substantial new, free car parking at suburban train stations. Instead, encourage people to walk or cycle short distances and improve bus services for longer distances.

In relation to measures to ensure state, territory and local government road infrastructure investment incorporate the Safe System principles:

- Dedicate a minimum of 5% of federal transport funding to pedestrian safety projects.

In relation to road trauma and incident data collection and coordination across Australia:

- Review processes to improve the accuracy of crash data that relates to pedestrians.
- Include all pedestrians injured or killed on the road network in the road safety statistics, even when no vehicle is involved.
- Collect data about pedestrian crashes in car parks.
- Adopt a target for an ongoing annual reduction in pedestrian fatalities and pedestrian hospitalisations.

In relation to other measures to support the Australian Parliament's ongoing resolve to reduce incidents on our roads:

- Ensure reporting and campaigns about pedestrian safety are impartial and do not result in victim blaming.
- Review the road rules to provide consistent pedestrian priority at intersections and in car parks.
- Establish driver education campaigns to improve understanding of road rules, particularly the situations where pedestrians have priority.
- Investigate whether driver compliance with road rules could be better enforced, particularly as it affects pedestrians.

Road safety support services and programs

Term of reference a. the effectiveness of existing road safety support services and programs, including opportunities to integrate Safe System principles into health, education, industry and transport policy;

The Safe System approach focuses on four areas:

- Safe roads
- Safe speeds
- Safe vehicles
- Safe people

This submission considers each of these below.

Safe roads

To make roads safer for pedestrians, walking routes should be direct, connected and separated from vehicles with space to walk, sit and interact.

Problematic locations for pedestrian safety can occur anywhere pedestrians share space with motor vehicles. This is most commonly in getting across the road, but also anywhere people cross driveways, walk in car parks and in places where there is no footpath, as is common in outer suburbs and rural areas. Safety can be improved in a variety of ways, such as:

- Providing footpaths and regular crossing opportunities. Crossings can be either formal such as signals or zebras, or informal such as painted medians or gaps in raised median.
- Upgrading roundabouts, slip lanes and intersections to provide (or reflect existing) pedestrian priority. Options include providing signals or zebra crossings, reducing the crossing distance and complexity, slowing approaching vehicles, making pedestrians more conspicuous or closing slip lanes to remove conflict points altogether.
- Better accommodating pedestrians in traffic signal operations. Signals generally prioritise vehicles over other road users, resulting in long wait times and short crossing times for pedestrians, and then only if they have pressed the button in time to get a signal at all. Signal cycles should be short to allow more crossing opportunities, but also provide long enough for everyone to get across. New technologies which distinguish between pedestrians and vehicles at signals and adjust crossing times accordingly should be rolled out to ensure every person has sufficient crossing time.

Even places where pedestrians do not mix with motor vehicles can be problematic locations. This can be due to others such as cyclists or dogs whose path is unpredictable. It can also be due to the design of the path itself, which can cause trips, particularly for older people.

Garrard (2013) reported findings from Li et al. (2006) that many outdoor falls could be prevented by better design of paths, kerbs, roads and car parks. "*Many of the problems stem from the fact that the system is generally designed for vehicles, and mainly for fit and healthy road users and is therefore often unforgiving of the needs and capabilities of older road users.*" Design standards need to ensure footpaths:

- provide level surfaces free from tripping hazards;
- are non-slip;
- are adequately wide for all users including those with mobility aids and prams as well as seating where appropriate;
- are well lit; and

- have pram ramps in line with the desired crossing point to reduce the need to negotiate kerbs (Oxley, O'Hern, Burtt, & Rossiter, 2016; Mantilla & Burtt, 2016)

Recommendation: Invest in road improvements that increase pedestrian safety and convenience.

Standards and guidelines should be updated so that design reflects priority. Across driveways and where drivers are turning at intersections pedestrians generally have priority, however drivers are often unaware and the physical cues suggest the opposite. VicRoads social media suggests that large numbers of drivers are unaware of their obligations under the current road rules to give way, particularly when turning. Updated infrastructure can coincide with driver education campaigns to improve understanding of road rules, particularly the situations where pedestrians have priority.

Recommendation: Update guidelines so that design reflects priority, particularly at crossing points and intersections to improve pedestrian safety and priority.

Footpaths should be places for people and Victoria Walks strongly opposes the use of the footpath by vehicles capable of high speeds like bicycles and e-scooters. The footpath should be a place where people feel safe and comfortable to walk. This is particularly important for the most vulnerable pedestrians; older people and those with a disability. It is not only crashes that concern these groups. For many older adults, walking is a complex task and requires coordination of multiple visual, cognitive, and psychomotor skills which often decline with age. Having to focus on what others are doing as well means they are not able to concentrate on the path, increasing the risk of falls as well as the fear of falling. This fear of falling can in turn deter them from walking, limiting their mobility, health, independence and social connections (Garrard, 2013).

The National Transport Commission is undertaking a review of road rules relating to e-scooters, and has suggested that e-scooters capable of speeds up to 25 km/h should be allowed on footpaths so long as they travel below 10km/h. This is a completely impractical suggestion, because there is no realistic prospect of that limit being understood and enforced.

Recommendation: Prohibit vehicles capable of high speeds like bicycles and e-scooters on the footpath to protect pedestrians' actual and perceived safety.

E-scooters and similar devices remain illegal to use in public space in most states of Australia, yet they are available for sale – this includes devices with motors of a greater wattage and/or capable of higher speeds than is allowed. This is, in our view, a preposterous situation. The relationship between laws governing the sale of products needs to be reconciled with other laws to ensure that only goods that can legally be used in Australia are available for sale in Australia.

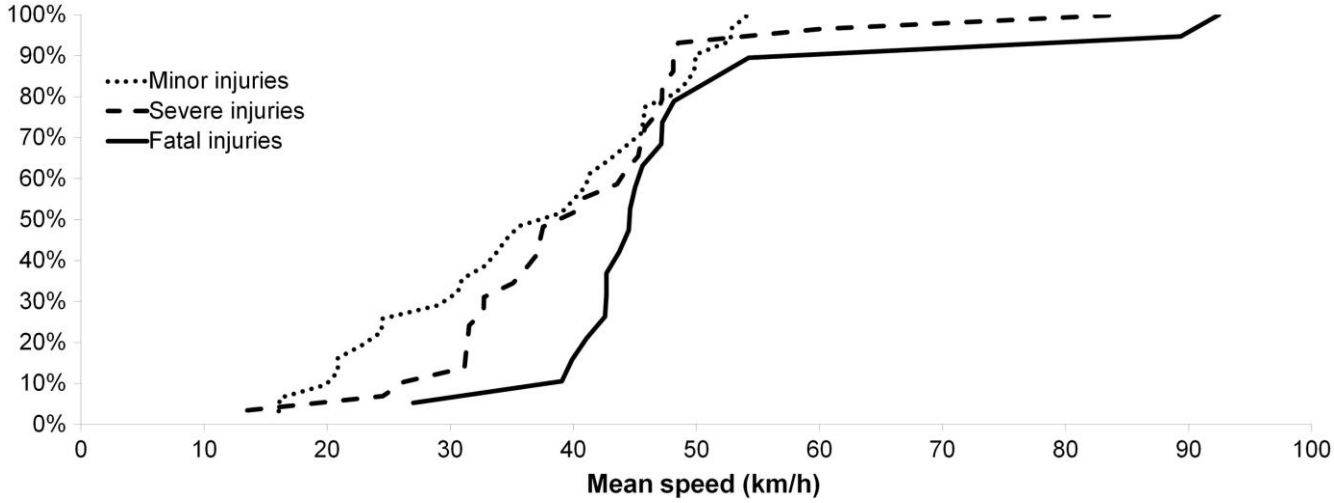
Recommendation: Ensure e-scooters and other personal mobility devices not able to be used legally in public space across most of Australia are not available for purchase.

Safe speeds

Vehicle speed impacts safety for everyone using the road network. Changes to speed limits are quick, easy and cheap compared to infrastructure changes.

Figure 1 shows that when a driver travelling at less than 40 km/h hits a person walking, the risk of death is significantly lower than at 50 km/h. The risk of serious injury to the pedestrian is considerably reduced at speeds below 30 km/h.

Figure 1: At vehicle speeds less than 30 km/h, the risk of serious injuries to pedestrians is significantly reduced (Source: Kröyer, 2015)



Historically speed limits have been set based almost solely on the road designation. The default urban speed limit in built up areas remains at 50 km/h today across most of Australia. A person hit by a vehicle travelling at 50 km/h is likely to be killed. If the vehicle was instead travelling at 40 km/h, the person is four times less likely to be killed. Best practice is to reduce vehicle speeds to 30 km/h where both vehicles and pedestrians are present, to minimise the risk and severity of pedestrian injuries (Oxley, Stephan, & O'Hern, 2020).

Analysis of the most recent ten years of crash data available for Victoria found pedestrian injuries cluster along major arterial roads, with 31% of pedestrian injuries occurring on roads with a posted speed of 60 km/h; the highest proportion of injuries in any one speed zone (Oxley, Stephan, & O'Hern, 2020).

There is currently an appetite for lower speed limits among many local councils. Permanent 40 km/h limits are being implemented across Australia in:

- Capital city central business districts.
- Many inner suburbs, for example South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Northcote and Footscray in Melbourne; North Sydney, Chatswood and Avalon in Sydney; and Brompton and West Croydon in Adelaide.
- Country towns such as Mildura in Victoria and Bathurst in NSW.

In addition, City of Yarra in Melbourne has completed a 12-month trial of 30 km/h area wide speed limits for parts of Fitzroy and Collingwood. Evaluation of the trial found speeding had reduced and resident support had increased. In December 2019, Council endorsed a proposal for a permanent 30 km/h speed limit for the area (City of Yarra; TAC, 2019).

The speed limit on some sections of road near the Sydney light rail has been reduced from 40 km/h to 20 km/h to improve safety and create a pedestrian friendly environment (Transport for NSW, 2019).

Recommendation: Support efforts by local and state governments to reduce speed limits, including default urban speed limits in residential areas and arterial roads limits.

Safe vehicles

New vehicles are assessed for safety under the Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP), with a maximum rating of five stars. The rating considers 'vulnerable road user protection' amongst other factors. However, as recently as last year (2019) the Jeep Wrangler received a safety rating of only one star, scoring less than 50% for vulnerable road user protection (ANCAP, 2019). Since 2000, 249 vehicles tested have been awarded only one star (TAC, 2020). Many of these vehicles are still on the roads today and available for purchase second hand.

Victoria Walks' understands driver assist technologies can help make newer vehicles safer. However, the design of some newer vehicles means they are less safe for those outside the vehicle. Sports utility vehicles (SUVs) made up nearly half (46%) of new car sales in Australia last year (Martin, 2020). An Australian study found that SUVs are part of the highest risk vehicle group in causing severe pedestrian injury (MUARC, Undated). Research from the USA attributed the increasing number of pedestrian deaths there to an increase in the number of SUVs sales and reported the finding that a person is two to three times more likely to be killed when hit by an SUV than a car (Lawrence, Bomey, & Tanner, 2018).

James Goodwin, chief executive of ANCAP, suggested that Tesla may have ignored the safety of vulnerable road users in the design of its 2019 Cybertruck (Schmidt, 2019). Why new vehicles which score such low safety ratings and are designed without safety in mind should be available for sale is an issue that the government should address.

Recommendation: Review new vehicles safety standards so that vehicles which pose significant risks to vulnerable road users are not available for importation or sale.

Safe people

The Safe Systems principles acknowledge the vulnerability of a person unprotected by a vehicle and the need to lower speeds to protect them. However, they focus on reducing road deaths assuming the status quo will continue; that is people will continue driving at current rates and must be accommodated. They don't challenge this assumption or try to reduce the risk by reducing the number and distance of driving trips.

Research has found that when more people walk and cycle, the safety of these modes increases (Robinson, 2005). The pedestrian fatality rate in the US (9.7 per 100 million km) is much higher than in other countries with significantly more walking, with rates per 100 million km of 1.9 in Germany, 1.2 in the Netherlands, 2.5 in Denmark and 2.7 in the UK (Buehler & Pucher, 2017). As more people walk and ride, drivers expect to see them and so change their behaviour (Jacobsen, 2003). It is likely that as more people walk or cycle, this includes people who also drive, increasing their awareness of these modes.

A shift away from driving aligns with changes to people's preferences with respect to how they travel. A 2012 report by the Australian Department of Infrastructure and Transport found private vehicle travel plateaued in the 1980s and since about 2005 has been declining, with public transport use on the increase (Department of Infrastructure and Transport, 2012). New vehicle sales in 2019 were the lowest since 2011 and followed a fall in 2018 (Chesterton, 2020). Passenger vehicles also represent a smaller proportion of the vehicle fleet, falling 0.3 per cent between 2018 and 2019 (ABS, 2019). This trend is not being driven by people being unable to afford cars, but rather people choosing to live in places where they don't have to own cars. Research suggests it is only Australians aged 65 and over that value 'car accessibility and parking' in town centres more than 'walking, cycling or public transport options' (Place Score, 2019, unpublished). Ironically, this group are most at risk of being killed or injured by a vehicle while walking.

The current road safety approach has not succeeded in significantly reducing the number of people killed on our roads. An alternative is to consider road safety as part of mobility for all people, whether they drive or not, and transport as part of the bigger liveability picture. A road safety strategy framed around modal shift would improve safety for the most vulnerable users and could be the 'game changer' that allows us to make substantive progress in reducing road trauma. The initial focus could be on short trips such as from home to train stations, activity centres and schools. It could also focus on people new to an area or changing routines such as when a child starts school, or a person starts a new job. Shifting from driving to walking has significant health benefits to the individual and multiple broader community benefits (Badawi, Maclean, & Mason, 2018).

The two key ways to achieve mode shift are 1) to make walking, cycling and public transport more attractive and convenient and 2) to make driving less attractive and convenient.

The federal government already acknowledge this to some extent, with the 2011 "Our Cities, Our Future" national policy identifying the need to reduce dependence on private vehicles. A 2012 report by the federal Department of Infrastructure and Transport found that increasing the mode share of walking, cycling and public transport contributes to:

- increased capacity in the transport network
- improved public health and reduced healthcare costs
- improved community wellbeing and social cohesiveness
- reduced environmental impacts.

Recommendation: Invest in modal shift from driving to walking, cycling and using public transport to improve safety of vulnerable road users.

Walking and public transport are complimentary, with some walking involved in 81% of trips to a train station and nearly all trips to bus and tram stops in Melbourne (Eady & Burtt, 2019). Improving the coverage and frequency of public transport and providing a convenient alternative to driving has the potential to significantly reduce the number of vehicle trips, making roads safer.

Recommendation: Increase investment in public transport.

Car parking at train stations and activity centres takes up a lot of space in prime locations for other uses, including housing. Substantial, new, free car parking at suburban train stations encourages people to drive what is often a short distance. Instead, improvements to walking, cycling and bus options would encourage other modes of travel to stations. This would also improve road safety directly by reducing vehicle traffic around railway stations.

Recommendation: Avoid creating substantial new, free car parking at suburban train stations. Instead, encourage people to walk or cycle short distances and improve bus services for longer distances.

Impact of road trauma

Term of reference b. the impact of road trauma on the nation, including the importance of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries in remote and regional areas

Pedestrians are the most vulnerable road users

The concept of how much force the human body can withstand in a crash is well researched and understood. Pedestrians are not protected in the same way a vehicle occupant is and are four times more likely to be injured than other road users as a result of a crash, according to a 2009 study by Elvik (cited in Oxley, Stephan, & O'Hern, 2020). In addition, older pedestrians are at even higher risk of injury, with people aged 70 or older approximately 1.6 times more likely to be injured than people aged 16 to 39 years (Oxley, Stephan, & O'Hern, 2020). They are more likely to sustain an injury if involved in a crash and it is harder for them to recover once injured. For older people who fracture a hip, between 25 and 40 per cent die within 12 months and for the remainder an increased risk of death persists for years afterwards (Oxley, O'Hern, Burtt, & Rossiter, 2016).

Pedestrians represent a significant proportion of the people killed

Data from the Australia Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) shows that over the past decade, the total number of people killed on Australian roads has trended downwards. The 1,188 people killed on our roads in 2019 was more than in 2018 (1,135 deaths), but still fewer than the annual average for the preceding ten years.

The downward trend in road deaths over the decade has been more pronounced for people in vehicles than pedestrians (BITRE, 2019). Of people killed on the roads, 13-14% have been pedestrians for the past 20 years. In 2019, nearly half (46%) of the people killed while walking were 60 years or older. The number and proportion of older pedestrians killed has been steadily increasing over the last 10 years (Figure 2). People 70 years or older represented 36% of all pedestrian fatalities in 2019. In comparison, they represented only 11% of the Australian population in 2017 according to the ABS. There were 37 pedestrians aged 80 or over killed, including eight in their 90s. With the ageing of the population, this is only likely to get worse.

Figure 2: Fatalities on Australian roads for the past 20 years show older pedestrians are increasingly at risk (data from BITRE)

	All fatalities	**Pedestrian fatalities**					
Period	Annual average	Annual average – all peds	Proportion of all road deaths	Annual average – peds 60+	Proportion of peds killed who were 60+	Annual average – peds 70+	Proportion of peds killed who were 70+
2019	1188	159	13%	73	46%	58	36%
2014-2018	1201	166	14%	70	42%	50	30%
2009-2013	1322	176	13%	66	37%	49	28%
2004-2008	1570	213	14%	75	35%	56	26%
1999-2003	1731	271	16%	96	36%	70	26%

In addition to road deaths, road injuries are a significant cost to society. Road injuries cost Australia $13.6 billion (41% of crash costs) compared to $10.2 billion for fatalities and $9.4 billion for property damage, according to a 2016 estimate by Litchfield (2017). The personal impact of road crashes, both deaths and serious injuries, is impossible to measure.

Figure 3 shows the number of people who have been hospitalized as a result of being injured while walking has trending upwards for the four years data is available (BITRE, 2019). Older people make up about one in four of the pedestrians hospitalised.

Figure 3: Pedestrians hospitalised as a result of road crashes in Australia (data from BITRE)

	Pedestrian hospitalisations		
Period	Total	Aged 65+	Proportion aged 65+
2016	2744	610	22%
2015	2634	643	24%
2014	2562	638	25%
2013	2672	608	23%

Road infrastructure investment

> *Term of reference d. measures to ensure state, territory and local government road infrastructure investment incorporates the Safe System principles*

General investment in roads and road safety tends to go to projects that either improve road safety for vehicle occupants or provide for increased traffic, or both. From a pedestrian perspective, this is more likely to be counter-productive than beneficial.

The upgrade of existing walking networks and creation of new ones requires a fund dedicated to improving infrastructure to make roads safer for pedestrians. The same is needed for cycling but should be totally separate. Our understanding is that the federal government do not currently provide any funding specifically for walking infrastructure. Subsequently, a dedicated funding stream that is for walking/pedestrian projects only is needed.

The UN recommends that 20 per cent of transport budgets should be spent on non-motorized transport (Badawi, Maclean, & Mason, 2018). With that context, we should start the transition by investing 5% of transport funding in walking.

Recommendation: Dedicate 5% of federal transport funding to pedestrian safety projects.

Data collection

> *Term of reference e. road trauma and incident data collection and coordination across Australia*

Accuracy of crash data

Existing crash data is generally based on police reports of road crashes. In Victoria, the police reported data under-reports the number of pedestrians killed on the road, possibly due to people who die in hospital (Oxley, Stephan, & O'Hern, 2020). Victoria Police do not generally create a formal report of a crash where no-one is injured, which suggests that crashes involving pedestrians are under-reported overall.

Victoria Walks also has concerns about the way information is collected after a crash and possible bias in police reporting. A pedestrian who is involved in a crash is much more likely to be injured or killed than the corresponding driver and may be unable to relate their statement to the Police, often resulting in only one side of the story being recorded. Evidence also suggests that the way in which crashes are reported can lead to victim blaming (Goddard, Ralph, Thigpen, & Iacobucci, 2019).

Recommendation: Review processes to improve the accuracy of crash data that relates to pedestrians.

Pedestrians injured or killed on the road network

Walking is considered a mode of transport, footpaths are part of the road reserve under various Acts and pedestrians must obey road rules. However, a pedestrian killed or injured on a public road without the involvement of a vehicle (motor vehicle, bicycle, tram) is not included in road crash statistics. Included are people who slip or fall while walking, or people killed by a wall collapsing onto the footpath. Single vehicle crashes are included in crash data, meaning another person in exactly the same situation but in a car, would be included.

There is little national research about pedestrian deaths that do not involve vehicles. However, pedestrian falls while walking in the Victorian road network result in 1,680 hospital admissions and 3,545 emergency department presentations each year. This is more than the annual 1600 pedestrian injuries recorded in road crashes (Oxley, O'Hern, Burtt, & Rossiter, 2016). The most common injury as a result of a fall was a fracture. Currently falls in the street are not reported to police and only appear in hospital data.

Government decision making on road safety project investment is typically based on road crash statistics. Including pedestrians injured and killed where no vehicle was involved broadens the discussion of road safety and encourages investment to address this issue. Without an accurate understanding of the causes and situations that lead to these deaths, there will be no change.

Recommendation: Include all pedestrians injured or killed on the road network in the road safety statistics, even when no vehicle is involved.

Car parks

The crash statistics don't include crashes that occur in car parks because most are considered private property. This is a much more significant issue for pedestrians than other road users, as they are more likely to be injured or even killed in low speed collisions. Collecting data about pedestrian crashes in car parks would enable them to be considered in road safety.

Recommendation: Collect data about pedestrian crashes in car parks as part of crash statistics.

National Road Safety Strategy

> *Term of reference f. recommending strategies, performance measures and targets for the next National Road Safety Strategy*

Over the past decade, pedestrian deaths have reduced at a much slower rate than all road deaths, approximately 0.5% per annum. Pedestrian injury data is only available for the four years from 2013 (BITRE, 2019). Although no significant trend can be established from the limited data, there does not appear to be any significant change in the number of people hospitalised while walking.

The next National Road Safety Strategy should adopt an ambitious target in relation to reducing the number of pedestrians killed on the road.

Recommendation: Adopt a target for an ongoing annual reduction in pedestrian fatalities and pedestrian hospitalisations.

Other measures

> *Term of reference g. other measures to support the Australian Parliament's ongoing resolve to reduce incidents on our roads, with a focus on the recommendations from the Inquiry into the effectiveness of the National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020*

'Blaming the victim'

Victoria Walks is concerned that responses to pedestrian road trauma often focus on the behaviour of people walking rather than drivers, who are often at fault, or the road environment. Focusing on the behaviour of victims tends to result in victim blaming.

Older people represent an increasing proportion of the pedestrians killed on our roads. Previous analysis of 5 years for official crash statistics found senior pedestrians do not appear to be at fault in the majority of crashes in which they are injured or killed. Whereas some senior walkers may make mistakes, the key causes are bad road design and poor driver behaviour (Mantilla & Burtt, 2016).

Recent articles and campaigns about pedestrians being distracted by mobile phones are not supported by evidence. Information on who was at fault in these more recent deaths is not publicly available. However older people, who largely account for the increasing number of pedestrian deaths, are less likely to own or use a mobile phone. Studies have found that older adults are more cautious, careful and law-abiding than younger people (Garrard, 2013).

A recent study by the New York City Department of Transportation, looking at both local and nationwide data, concluded that mobile phone use was not a significant cause of pedestrian trauma, causing less than 1% of crashes.

A finding from Austroads 2016 report that "up to 40% of pedestrians may be distracted by mobile phones when crossing the road" was ultimately found to be unsubstantiated (Mepham, 2016). The study included people talking and listening to music while crossing the road; behaviour accepted by drivers. However, groups responsible for pedestrian safety set different standards for pedestrians, even though distracted drivers are a risk not only to themselves but to others.

The victim blaming mentality is seen in some media reports on crashes and "pedestrian safety" campaigns and tips focused solely on pedestrians including from Victoria Police and the Victorian government. Those involved in pedestrian safety have a responsibility to provide balanced reporting and real solutions for people who are obeying the law and not endangering others.

Recommendation: Ensure campaigns about pedestrian safety are impartial and do not result in victim blaming.

Road rules

Currently some road rules related to pedestrians are inconsistent with physical cues and drivers' understanding.

One rule relates to right of way at unsignalized intersections. Currently pedestrians have priority over drivers turning into a street, but not those turning out. This creates a legal situation where the pedestrian can cross half the street, but then must stop to give way to a vehicle in the other half. Changing this to provide pedestrian priority across the entire street would be consistent and clearer to both people walking and driving.

The second rule relates to car parks. The interpretation by Victoria Police is that car parks are road related areas and so the usual road rules apply (Victoria Police, 2009). However, most car parks are not designed as roads and often do not include footpaths. This means pedestrians, including people walking to and from their car, have little priority or safe space to walk. Car parks should, and often do, operate as shared zones, but this is not reflected in the road rules.

Recommendation: Review the road rules to provide consistent pedestrian priority at intersections and in car parks.

Driver education campaigns to inform drivers of their responsibilities and ability to injure and kill others should be conducted at the same time as any changes to the road rules.

Recommendation: Establish driver education campaigns to improve understanding of road rules, particularly the situations where pedestrians have priority.

Enforcement of laws other than speed

In the same way pedestrians are victimised when injured, there tends to be a focus on pedestrians breaking the law rather than driver non-compliance. Victoria Walks doesn't object to walkers being fined for breaking laws, but also wants to see attention on driver behaviour which is illegal and dangerous to pedestrians. This includes drivers not giving way, particularly when turning, and blocking crossings and intersections.

Recommendation: Investigate whether driver behaviour could be better enforced, particularly that affecting pedestrians.

If you have any queries regarding this submission please contact Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer on brossiter@victoriawalks.org.au or 9662 3975.

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