

Submission to the draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30

Ms Gabby O'Neill
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By email: roadsafetystrategy@infrastructure.gov.au

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Dear Ms O'Neill,

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this joint submission made on behalf of leading bicycle organisations in Australia in response to the draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030.

It is a submission focusing principally on two key elements of the National Road Safety Strategy:

- I. the provision of appropriate, separated infrastructure for improving the safety of vulnerable road users, specifically pedestrians and bicycle riders, and
- II. the safety imperative for safe speeds to be adopted in key local activity areas, school zones and local streets.

This submission complements a detailed joint submission from leading bicycle organisations – lead author Dr Marilyn Johnson, Amy Gillett Foundation and submissions from other Australian bicycle organisations and 30Please.org.

Co-signing organisations are:



Joint contributors

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This submission incorporates the views and concerns from the following organisations and individuals:

Amy Gillett Foundation	Dan Kneipp Dr Marilyn Johnson
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Context

Improving safety for Australians who choose to walk, ride bicycles and catch public transport will save lives and reduce serious injuries.

While significant improvements have been most evident for those travelling in motor vehicles over the life of the last National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS), road safety outcomes for vulnerable road users – people riding bicycles and pedestrians – are worse.

Major increases in walking and cycling by Australians during the COVID pandemic were unexpected and reinforce the importance of a national strategy that is agile and able to accommodate substantial changes in transport behaviour that may occur in the future and certainly during the life of the strategy.

Increases in the participation in walking and cycling are likely due to the fact that most state, territory and local government jurisdictions explicitly aim to achieve growth in these modes in coming years for the health, environmental and community benefits, and to manage growth in transport congestion¹.

The boom in walking and bike riding during COVID has provided an opportunity to support investment in projects that provide safer environments for pedestrians and bicycle riders in corridors of high traffic speed and/or volumes and on shared infrastructure.

A significant omission of the NRSS is an acknowledgement of the diversity of participation in walking and cycling across all ages and abilities. One of the largest participation cohorts for bike riding are children, and both young and older Australians have high levels of participation in walking. Many Australians who are unable to drive due to mobility issues rely on walking, riding and public transport for their mobility needs. This provides an additional context for very clear separation and lower speed limits in areas where children walk and ride and people of all ages walk and ride to local activity centres, school precincts, workplaces, local shops and streets. Specific safety actions should recognise these diverse cohorts.

The draft NRSS's focus on 'safe roads,' 'safe vehicles' and 'safe road use' together with safe speeds acknowledge that they are all critical to the achievement of a safe system. People make mistakes – 'approximately 75% of all serious crashes – killed and seriously injured – involve a mistake'² and 'evidence shows that risk-taking behaviour such as speeding, drink-drug driving and not wearing seatbelts or helmets were factors that contributed to 27% of crashes that resulted in death or serious injuries.'³ These key statistics acknowledges that it can happen to anyone and greater attention is needed to invest in safe, forgiving environments so a mistake doesn't result in serious injury or worse.

Appropriate infrastructure and lower speeds are both critical components of a safe system that create a forgiving environment. Both must be explicit and recommended as part of the proposed

¹ E.g., Transport for NSW, Future Transport 2056 (2018). Chapter 1, A Vision for Transport. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

² Road Safety Commission (2020), Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia, Government of Western Australia. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

³ Road Safety Council (2019), Imagine Zero. Government of Western Australia. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

Movement and Place framework in the next NRSS to meet the proposed objectives of the government for this national 10-year strategy which aims to:

- reduce the rate of deaths from road crashes per 100,000 population by at least 50% by 2030, to 689, and
- reduce the rate of serious injuries from road crashes per 100,000 population by at least 30% by 2030, to 33,373.⁴

Role of safer infrastructure for improving road safety outcomes

- Reference to the importance of protected infrastructure is absent from the NRSS section on vulnerable road users (VRU). The NRSS can and should make a clear connection between infrastructure types and road safety outcomes.
 - The provision of safe routes for those who walk or choose to ride a bike is needed to address the uniquely poor safety statistics for VRU death and serious injury over the life of the last National Road Safety Strategy. Bike riders suffered a 45% increase in fatalities in the decade to September 2020 and both fatalities and serious injuries show significant increases in the most recent figures available for all VRU.⁵
 - Provision of appropriate, separated infrastructure for vulnerable road users on transport corridors that have a high 'Movement' function is an appropriate response to the risks that high traffic levels and speeds present for those who walk or ride.
 - Provision of separation between fast moving bike riders and pedestrians is also indicated in areas of high active travel.
- The NRSS should explicitly articulate the value and benefits of appropriate, separated infrastructure to both improve the safety outcomes for vulnerable road users and boost participation in walking and riding, which would also reduce pressure on existing transport corridors and improve safety outcomes.
- Road user populations for walking and cycling are much more diverse than for motor vehicle traffic, both by age and ability. They may provide a more compelling case for separation and/or consideration of safe speeds.
- Research shows the benefit-cost ratio of investing in walking and bike riding is very high compared to other transport projects at 13:1⁶.
 - Research shows 80% of local governments in Victoria have plans to improve walk/bike options but lack the funding.⁷
- A reference to innovative infrastructure treatments (e.g., infrastructure built as a response to safety concerns during the COVID pandemic) is lacking.
 - Given with significant changes in travel behaviour (increases in walking and cycling) due to COVID and the rapid deployment of protected walking and riding infrastructure around the world to explicitly address infection and safety concerns, the NRSS should reference the validity of new, innovative approaches that improve safety and will also help to 'future-proof' the strategy.

⁴ National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 Consultation Draft (2020), Commonwealth of Australia. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

⁵ Office of Road Safety fact sheet on vulnerable road users (2020). Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

⁶ Badawi, Y, Maclean, F, and Mason, B, (2018) The economic case for investment in walking, Victoria Walks, Melbourne. Accessed [here](#) March 2021.

⁷ Municipal Association of Victoria (2020) Victorian local government walking and cycling survey. Accessed [here](#) March 2021.

- The Australian Government has the opportunity to support the national objectives of the NRSS 2021-2030 through its transport, road safety and infrastructure funding programs.
 - Clearly articulated requirements that funded projects explicitly improve road safety outcomes for pedestrians and bicycle riders would place safety for all road users as a key outcome of Commonwealth transport investment, ensure equitable access to transport options for disadvantaged populations and contribute to the successful implementation of the People and Place framework across our transport environment.
 - We support the key priority 'Infrastructure planning and investment' action item ('Infrastructure funding at all levels will be linked to measurable improvements in safety') and recommend it include explicit language in support of positive provision for vulnerable road users.

Recommendations

- 1. As part of the 'Infrastructure and planning investment' and 'Vulnerable road user' Key Priorities, we recommend that all federal infrastructure funding for road safety projects, major transport projects and community infrastructure funding explicitly require consideration of improved safety outcomes for pedestrians and bicycle riders, to provide appropriate separated or dedicated infrastructure where appropriate.**
- 2. The 'Vulnerable road users' Key Priority section, under the sub-heading 'provide safe access for all road users,' should also link the fact that provision of protected infrastructure makes bike riders safer.**
- 3. The diversity of walking and bike riding by age and ability should be acknowledged within the NRSS priorities and actions.**

Role of safer speeds as part of Movement and Place

- The impact of speed on pedestrian survival rates is clear and recognised nationally and internationally.
 - At 30kph the risk of death in a crash of a motor vehicle with a pedestrian is 10%.
 - At 50kph the risk of death rises to 85%.⁸

Determining optimal speed limit in built-up areas



Above: graphic courtesy of www.30Please.org campaign

- Reducing speeds reduces the number of crashes, saves lives and the lower speeds in communities improve quality of life.
- Area-wide adoption of lower speeds are a fast, low-cost intervention that will make Australian neighbourhoods safer for everyone.
- Due to smoother traffic flow and pre-existing low effective speeds in local streets, lower speed limits have been shown to have little impact on actual travel times.
- The Strategy should provide guidance to recommend use of appropriate speed limits (from 10kph to 30kph) in high pedestrian, school and commercial activity zones that could alternatively be described as having a high 'Place' function.
 - We support the establishment of 'appropriate speed zones' as mentioned in the NRSS fact sheet on 'movement and place'⁹

⁸ Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety, Speed and fatalities. NSW Government. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

⁹ Movement and Place factsheet (2021), Office of Road Safety. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

- Guidance on safe speeds is increasingly indicated and strongly supported by key Australian stakeholders¹⁰¹¹, and internationally¹², to reduce the road toll and serious injury.
- On transport corridors that have a high 'Movement' function, value and benefits of provision of appropriate, separated infrastructure for vulnerable road users should be explicitly identified and recommended.

Recommendations

- 4. We call for the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 to recommend that speed limit guidance be established for lower speed zones in areas of high Place function, in particular around local school zones, activity centres with high pedestrian and bicycle traffic and on local, suburban streets.**
- a. In particular, we recommend that speed limits that reduce the chance of a pedestrian/cyclist dying if hit by a car to 10% be adopted in areas of high pedestrian and bicycle activity, especially around schools, local streets and local shopping precincts.**

Other responses to specific aspects of the draft NRSS

Vulnerable Road User section.

Vulnerable road users are defined as pedestrians, bicycle riders and motorcycle riders¹³. Each of these road user groups have quite distinct travel behaviour, vulnerabilities, enforcement and infrastructure requirements.

A strategic approach to such a diverse group of road users requires these differences to be acknowledged and appropriate actions considered for each group at the very least to ensure the NRSS will achieve reductions in death and trauma for each group.

A strategic approach that adheres to Vision Zero principles must also consider systemic responses that recognise and account for individual mistakes and behaviours and enhance the likelihood for safer outcomes for all users.

Comments to the four actions are provided below.

Vulnerable Road User section – Actions:

1. We support the first action to '*Implement Movement and Place frameworks to support best practice speed management and tailored safe system road treatments.*' This is the focus of the preceding recommendations in our submission.

The next three actions seem to be related to motorcycle riders and are actions that are also limited in various ways.

2. '*strengthen graduated licensing arrangements for motorbike riders*' – not applicable.

¹⁰ National Heart Foundation of Australia (2012) Slow Motion: Why reducing speed will promote walking and cycling, Heart Foundation, Adelaide. Accessed [here](#) March 2021.

¹¹ van den Dool, D, Tranter, P, Boss, A. (2019) Safe-Street Neighbourhoods: the role of lower speed limits – 2019 Update WA & NSW, first published in the Journal of the Australasian College of Road Safety, Vol 28 No 3, 2017. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

¹² 6th UN Global Road Safety Week – Streets for Life #Love30 campaign (2021). Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

¹³ Movement and Place factsheet (2021), Office of Road Safety. Accessed [here](#) in March 2021.

3. *'promote consumer information about protective clothing and helmets'* – this advice, while seemingly reasonable, is not a measure to ensure motor vehicles do not crash into pedestrians or cyclists or that the severity of such crashes does not result in death or serious injury to the VRU.
4. *'Adopt best practice coordinated enforcement of key behavioural issues including speed limits and drug and alcohol laws'* – while not clear from this action if it is directed at drivers of motor vehicles, enforcement is an important action to ensure motor vehicle drivers are less likely to kill and seriously injure vulnerable road users.

Recommendations

- 5. *Identify key actions that benefit each of pedestrian, bicycle rider and motorcycle rider group road safety outcomes.***
- 6. *Speed reduction, separated and/or appropriate infrastructure, enforcement measures should be included as actions in this section.***
- 7. *With bicycle safe passing distance legislation now in place nationally as a primary road safety measure, it also should be mentioned as part of the enforcement activities that will improve road safety outcomes for bicycle riders over the life of the next NRSS.***

For further questions or queries, please contact:

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