

Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll

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INQUIRY INTO THE INCREASE IN VICTORIA'S ROAD TOLL

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Terms of Reference

On 5 June 2019, the Legislative Council agreed to the following motion:

That this House requires the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to inquire into, consider and report, no later than 1 December 2019, on the increase in the Victorian road toll in 2019, including but not limited to, an examination of the —

- (1) current Victorian Towards Zero Road Safety Strategy 2016-2020 and progress towards its aim of a 20 per cent reduction in fatalities with 200 or less lives lost annually by 2020;
- (2) adequacy and scope of the current driver drug and alcohol testing regime;
- (3) adequacy of current speed enforcement measures and speed management policies;
- (4) adequacy of current response to smart phone use, including the use of technology to reduce the impact of smart phone use on driver distraction;
- (5) measures to improve the affordability of newer vehicles incorporating driver assist technologies;
- (6) adequacy of current road standards and the road asset maintenance regime;
- (7) adequacy of driver training programs and related funding structures such as the L2P program; and
- (8) adequacy and accuracy of road collision data collection — put and agreed to.



Prepared by: Streets Alive Yarra

www.streets-alive-yarra.org

facebook.com/streetsaliveyarra/

Foreword

Streets Alive Yarra is a non-profit, volunteer, resident and ratepayer action group with a [vision](#) for more trees, wider footpaths and vibrant businesses in thriving [neighbourhoods](#). We see our streets being used by people from [8 to 80 years old](#), irrespective of whether they choose to walk, cycle, use public transport or drive. Residents and shoppers are able to move safely, comfortably, and conveniently around Yarra; and can easily find a park near shops.



Image credit: OCULUS Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

Streets Alive Yarra was founded in 2017 and now has over 2,200 likes on Facebook, increasing by 10-20 per week. A network of local champions develops concepts and proposals for how to improve their local street or precinct. Streets Alive Yarra is also Yarra's Walkability Action Group (WAG) representative for Victoria Walks.

Further information is available at www.streets-alive-yarra.org.

Summary

Streets Alive Yarra welcomes the opportunity to address the terms of reference of the inquiry into the increase in Victoria's road toll.

In summary, progress in addressing the road toll is unacceptably slow because the State Government is failing to comprehensively implement Safe System. The Safe System methodology is well understood, implemented and proven in other countries. It does not need to be re-invented, re-trialled, or 'adapted for Victoria'. It merely needs to be implemented.

(1) current strategy and progress

The State Government's current strategy is failing. Progress is unacceptably slow.

The State Government is failing to comprehensively implement Safe System, thus hindering its' stated aim of a 20 percent reduction in fatalities by 2020.

Safe System is well understood, implemented and proven in other countries. It does not need to be re-invented, re-trialled, or 'adapted for Victoria'. It merely needs to be implemented.

Implementing Safe System would also be saving for the taxpayer, as population health and trauma costs would decrease by more than the infrastructure cost. In other words, investing in Safe System has a clear positive business case [Reference: <https://streets-alive-yarra.org/business-case/>].

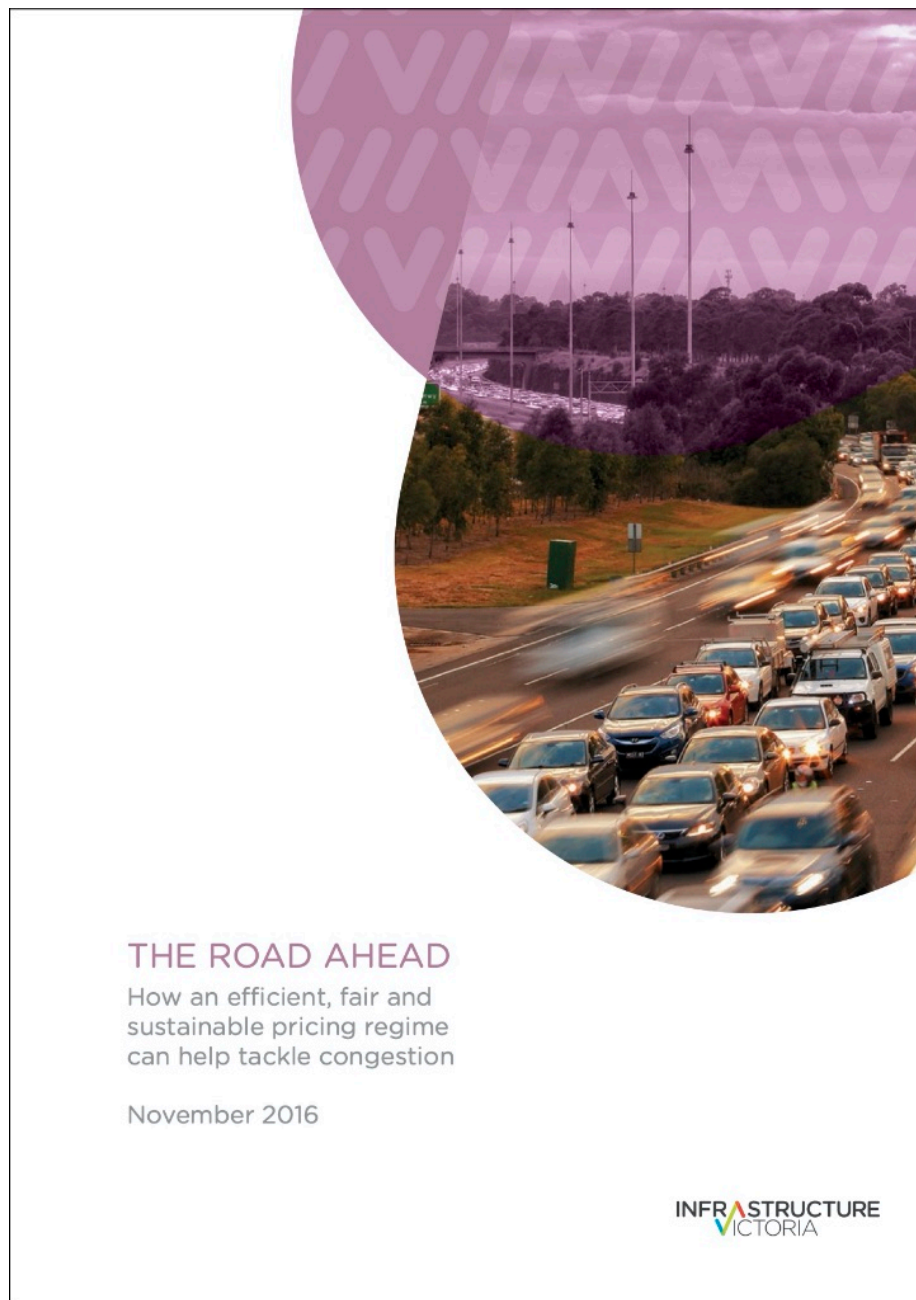
The State Government can easily and rapidly implement Safe System in a comprehensive manner. Examples include:

- Reducing the number of crashes by reducing the number of vehicle km driven by redirecting the transport budget away from roads and toward rail for both people and freight.



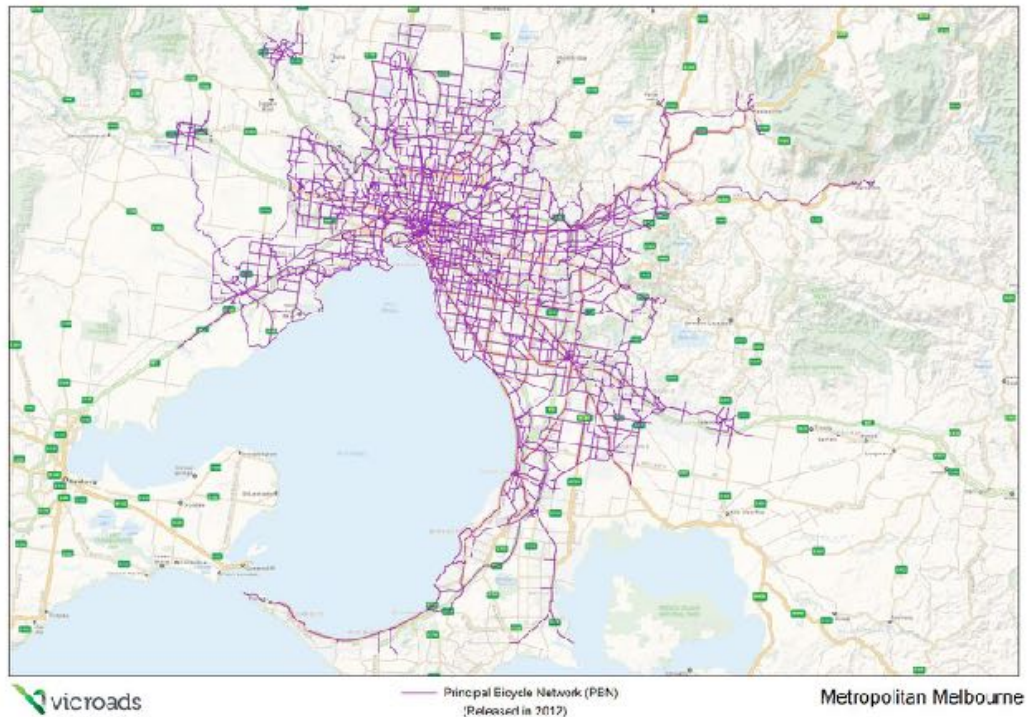
Source: Rail Futures Institute

- Reducing the likelihood of crashes by reducing the number of vehicle km driven by imposing demand responsive driving charges on all VicRoads declared roads.



Source: Infrastructure Victoria

- Reducing the likelihood of crashes by separating people cycling from people driving by building the a comprehensive network of protected bicycle lanes that lead to 30 km/h superblocks. Designs should be guided by best practice from The Netherlands or Denmark. The network should include protected intersections.



Source: VicRoads



Source: VicRoads

- Reducing the likelihood of serious injury or death as an outcome of crashes by constructing centre safety barriers on all highways with a speed limit of above 80 km/h, or by reducing speed limits to 80 km/h on all roads and highways that lack a centre dividing barrier.



Source: Towards Zero

- Reducing the likelihood of serious injury or death as an outcome of crashes by reducing speed limits to 30 km/h on all streets or roads that lack protected bicycle lanes. 30 km/h could start in the Hoddle grid in 2020 and expand outwards by 2 km each year, covering all local streets within 10 km of the CBD by 2025.



Source: Towards Zero



Source: Dutch Cycling Embassy

- Reducing the likelihood of crashes by reducing the number of vehicle km driven by encouraging walking, by banning the parking of motorbikes on footpaths.
- Offering full funding for any Safe System investment conducted by any Local Government Council in Victoria, such as wider footpaths, raised threshold treatments, wombat crossings, 30 km/h superblocks, protected bicycle lanes, or 20-minute neighbourhoods.



Image credit: Streets Alive Yarra, Google Maps

(2) adequacy and scope of the current driver drug and alcohol testing regime;

If the State Government wishes to reduce drug usage by drivers, then the best return for the taxpayer dollar would be to legalise drugs. This would allow drugs to be manufactured in accordance with standards, taxed like cigarettes and alcohol, and treated as a health issue. Revenues from taxation would pay for education and rehabilitation, thus decreasing the number of drug affected drivers, and reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries caused by affected drivers.

(3) adequacy of current speed management policies;

Current speed enforcement measures and management policies are inadequate. The State Government should design and build streets that encourage drivers to voluntarily choose to drive at lower speeds, particularly within our cities and towns. Examples include Dutch woonerfs:



Source: Streetfilms

On many roads, drivers speed because they believe they will escape detection. The solution is to roll out many more hidden speed cameras.

Existing speed limits do not align with Safe System. The State Government should mandate lower speed limits, such as:

- 30 km/h for any street without protected footpaths and protected bicycle paths
- 80 km/h for any road without a centre wire rope barrier

(4) adequacy of current response to smart phones;

Current responses are inadequate. The best solution is to remove the likelihood of different modes of transport from colliding. The State Government should invest in a continuous, cohesive network of protected bicycle lanes that lead to 30 km/h superblocs.

Also, drivers illegally use smart phones because they believe they will escape detection. The solution is to expand the use of high resolution cameras, either fixed on poles on highways, or fixed on the helmets of bicycle police.

(5) measures to improve the affordability of newer vehicles incorporating driver assist technologies;

We do not support measures that are specifically intended to improve the affordability of newer vehicles incorporating driver assist technologies. While this expenditure may reduce road trauma, other investments would deliver better value. Specifically, taxpayers would receive a greater return on their dollar by directing investments toward Safe System infrastructure.

The State Government can however incentivise people to upgrade to newer and safer vehicles by imposing a 'pollution cordon' in Melbourne, only permitting vehicles of a certain emission standard to cross. The standard could tighten each year. Newer vehicles are both cleaner and safer, particularly electric vehicles that are supplied with hardware that is capable of 'full self driving' via future software updates.

(6) adequacy of current road standards;

Existing road design standards are inadequate because they do not align with Safe System. The State Government should extend the Safe System concept to incorporate the iRAP road safety star rating method [reference: <https://www.irap.org>], and mandate that all new roads (and all maintenance projects) should be designed to deliver roads with 5-star ratings.

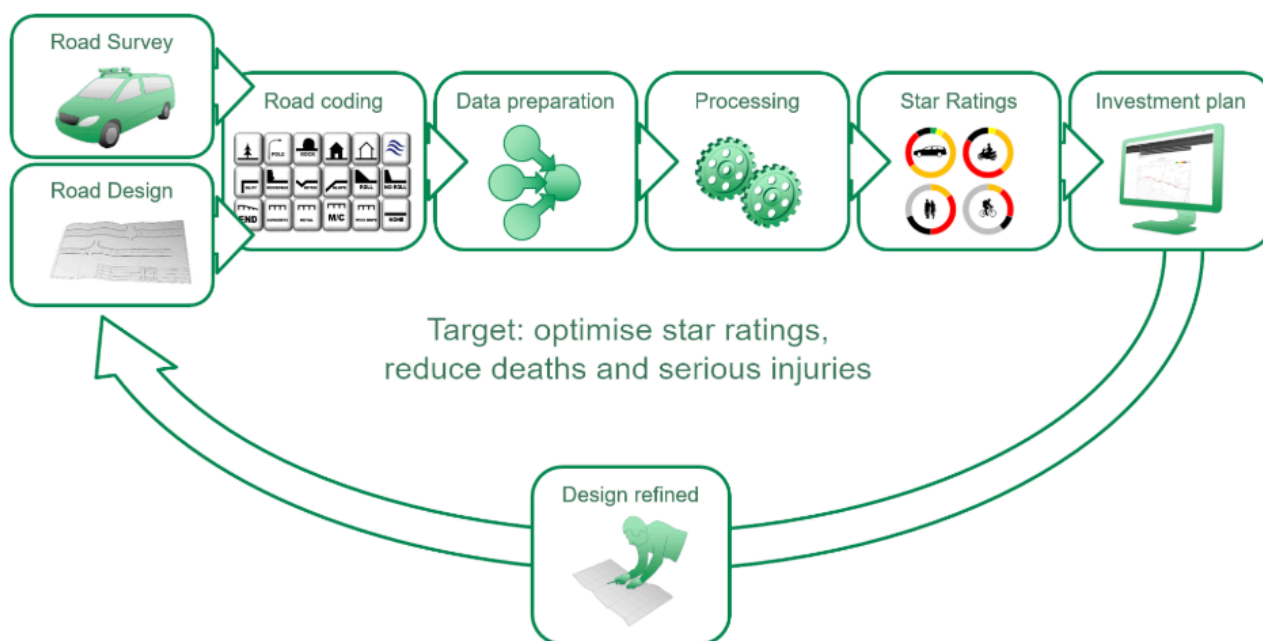
(7) adequacy of driver training programs;

We do not support increased funding to driver training programs or the L2P program. While increased expenditure may reduce road trauma, other investments would deliver better value. Specifically, taxpayers would receive a greater return on their dollar by directing investments toward Safe System infrastructure.

The State Government can however improve the skills of Victoria's cohort of drivers by mandating that driving licenses expire after 10 years, and requiring people to repeat their theory and practical tests. Driving is a perishable skill and drivers can pick up bad habits over time that lead to crashes. The burden of repeating the tests would dissuade many people from retaining their driving license, thus building voter support for investment in transport modes that impose far lower burdens of road trauma, such as walking, cycling and public transport.

(8) adequacy and accuracy of road collision data collection.

Existing processes are inadequate. It is misleading to base investment decisions on past crash data. For example, a street may have recorded zero cyclist deaths in the last 10 years not because it is safe, but because it is so dangerous that no cyclists dare to use it. Instead, investment decisions should be based on the risk of death or serious injury occurring, if people (or any transport mode) chose to use the street. In other words, the State Government should conduct an iRAP road safety star rating assessment of all roads in Victoria, and direct immediate funding to lift all roads to at least a 3-star level.



Source: iRAP

Concluding remarks

Streets Alive Yarra applauds the Legislative Council's focus on the road toll. We would be delighted to provide further detail or explanation of the themes raised in this document.

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