Joint Select Committee on Road Safety

Image credit: www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Road_Safety

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www.streets-alive-yarra.org

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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.

Introduction

Streets Alive Yarra welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Road Safety, regarding the terms of reference:

- 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 impact of road trauma on the nation, including the importance of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries in remote and regional areas;
- the possible establishment of a future parliamentary Standing Committee on Road Safety and its functions;
- measures to ensure state, territory and local government road infrastructure investment incorporates the Safe System principles;
- road trauma and incident data collection and coordination across Australia;
- recommending strategies, performance measures and targets for the next National Road Safety Strategy;
- recommendations for the role of the newly established Office of Road Safety; and
- 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.

Effectiveness of existing programs

Unfortunately, Safe System is not being integrated and implemented into transport policy. Existing programs, mechanisms and policy measures are ineffective.

One problem is that Safe System has an opportunity cost, i.e. Federal, State or Local Government can win more votes for their party at the next election by directing funding to other areas. This dissuades Governments from implementing evidence based policy.

Another problem is that Australia has a vertical fiscal imbalance. Local Government is responsible for expenditure to maintain or improve many streets, but does not benefit from reduced population health costs. Instead, State and Federal Governments benefit. The solution is to remove the vertical fiscal imbalance by providing sustained funding to Local Government to invest in Safe System.

Impact of road trauma

Road trauma has a significant impact on the nation, including:

- Immediate physical and emotional trauma,
- Ongoing care of those affected by physical trauma (costs and emotional burden),
- Dissuading people from choosing lower cost forms of transport such as walking, cycling or using public transport; owing to the risk of death or serious injury from being struck by people driving cars,
- Worse population health outcomes (feeling unhealthy and unhappy, less able to work)
- Higher population health costs (Medicare) owing to a population that is less healthy than it could be,
- Lower tourism revenue, owing to cities that are less attractive than they could be (compare beautiful cities in Europe that have high rates of walking and cycling, with Australian cities)

Further information on the cost of trauma is available at: https://streets-alive-yarra.org/cost-of-crashes/

Measures to ensure investment incorporates the Safe System principles

The Federal Government has many options to ensure that state, territory and local government properly incorporate Safe System principles, including:

- Provide sustained long-term funding to local government for road infrastructure that aligns with Safe System, such as:
    - 30 km/h superblocks,
    - continuous footpaths,
    - protected bicycle lanes, and
    - level access tram stops.
- Provide sustained long-term funding to state government for road infrastructure that aligns with Safe System, such as arterial roads with fully separated and protected bicycle lanes.
- Require state and local government to reduce speed limits in accordance with Safe System, 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
- Link federal road funding to requirements to deliver road infrastructure that is rated at least 5 stars by the International or Australian Road Assessment Program (iRAP or AusRAP). Roads that are rated at 5 star under iRAP align well with Safe System.
- Providing funding to each local government in Australia to fund a iRAP/AusRAP hazard identification and risk assessment review of a selection of representative streets in their region, such as a shopping street, an access street and a residential street. This will build the evidence base for investment in infrastructure that aligns with Safe System.

Other measures

The Federal Government can also provide sustained long-term funding to state and territory governments for public transport infrastructure. This would reduce incidents on our roads.

Concluding remarks

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

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