

# ACRS Submission on Victoria's 30-year Infrastructure Strategy



## ***About the Australasian College of Road Safety***

The Australasian College of Road Safety was established in 1988 and is the region's peak organisation for road safety professionals and members of the public who are focused on saving lives and serious injuries on our roads.

The College Patron is His Excellency General the Honourable David John Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

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## Introduction

The Australasian College of Road Safety is the region's peak membership association for road safety with a vision of eliminating death and serious injury on the road. Our members include experts from all areas of road safety including policy makers, health and transport professionals, academics, community organisations, researchers, federal, state and local government agencies, private companies and members of the public. The purpose of the College is to support our members in their efforts to eliminate serious road trauma through knowledge sharing, professional development, networking and advocacy. Our objectives include the promotion of road safety as a critical organisational objective within government, business and the community; the promotion and advocacy of policies and practices that support harm elimination; the improvement of relative safety outcomes for vulnerable demographic and user groups within the community; the promotion of post-crash policies and practices; and the promotion of a collegiate climate amongst all those with responsibilities for and working in road safety.

The College believes that we should prevent all fatal and serious injuries on our roads; the road traffic system must be made safe for all road users; system designers should aim to prevent human error and mitigate its consequences; life and health are not exchangeable for other benefits in society; and that all College policy positions must be evidence based.

## ACRS response to the Consultation

### a) Importance of road safety

Infrastructure design and improvement is considered to be a priority intervention in road safety, and the World Health Organization has stated that "road infrastructure has traditionally focused on motorised transport and economic efficiency at the expense of safety, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists"(1) p23. Almost half of road deaths are among those with least protection – cyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists, and a lack of infrastructure is key vulnerability.(2, 3) Improving infrastructure to 'create walkable, bikeable, liveable streets' is listed as one of the top 10 interventions cities can make to address non-communicable diseases and road trauma.(4)

The importance of road safety and infrastructure to improve road safety (5) are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals including 3.6 to half the number of global deaths and serious injuries from road traffic crashes and 11.2 to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, and requiring improved infrastructure for cycling, walking and public transport.(6)

The current version of the Victorian Infrastructure Strategy fails to recognise these connections. Despite road trauma costing Victoria more than \$6.3 billion annually (7), and the globally recognised links with infrastructure, safety is not prioritised. There are 10 stated objectives of the Infrastructure Strategy, with the second being 'foster healthy, safe and inclusive communities'. However, few of the 94 recommendations even mention let alone focus on transport safety. In contrast, productivity, also an objective, is given an entire section. Improved road safety may well be a by-product of several recommendations such as 21 (prepare for increasingly automated vehicle fleets), 23 (incorporate personal mobility devices in regulation), 27 (improve technology and infrastructure for a responsive police service), 39 (transform cycling in Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong), 40 (improve walking and cycling data to better estimate travel, health and safety impact and benefits), and 78 (deliver funding certainty for regional road maintenance and

upgrades). However, they are not recommendations with the aim of improving road safety and are not comprehensive.

The Victorian Government has signed up to the National Road Safety Strategy 2021-30 goal of halving road deaths by 2030 – a goal also reflected in Victoria’s own Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030.(8, 9) With infrastructure being such a vital element of road safety, being largely invisible within the Infrastructure Strategy does not align well with aim to achieve those goals. Road safety improvements compete for infrastructure funding and need to be seen as a clear and visible priority.

In the 12 months to April 2023, 266 people died on Victorian roads – the highest number since 2017.(10) A further 5,481 claims arising from hospitalisations due to road trauma were received by the Transport Accident Commission in the 12 months to October 2022. (11) We need to do more to reduce and eventually eliminate road trauma, and infrastructure has a significant role to play in achieving this.

People should reasonably be able to expect that they will not be killed or seriously injured just trying to get from A to B. The road network currently sets people up to fail where something out of their control, or a simple mistake by them or someone else could result in death or serious injury. Having a transport system where the likelihood of crashing is not minimised and the system does not do enough to protect people is inconsistent with the high standards Victorians expect and deserve.

## **b) Strategic ideas**

- We need more comprehensive assessments of value from infrastructure projects to ensure we build transport infrastructure that delivers safety, public and social health, environmental and productivity outcomes.
- Investments in big road projects could be distributed to local government for comprehensive neighbourhood improvement projects that deliver safety, public and social health and environmental needs (e.g., concentrating on enabling active travel to public transport hubs, schools and shops).
- Pressure on outer suburban roads leads to removal of roundabouts and replacement with unsafe high speed intersections, and expensive road duplication projects built to highway standards that further entrench car dependence and increase inequity; is there a better and more efficient way to provide public mobility?
- Comprehensive integration of land use planning and transport planning is needed to safely accommodate population growth and ageing. The current version of the Infrastructure Strategy Land Use Transport Integration model states that “Transport infrastructure supports economic productivity and growth and strengthens community and social benefits. This occurs through reduced costs benefiting businesses and individuals including lower freight and business trip costs, shorter travel times, improved safety and enhanced access to education, services, employment opportunities and recreational activities” (12) p2. However, the model does not mention safety at all in the detail. Instead, the model is described as providing “valuable insights into economic impacts of transport infrastructure proposals...capturing potential land use changes, broad level traffic and travel patterns and changes, direct productivity impacts and wider economic benefits” p3.
- The Infrastructure Strategy should include as a recommendation, ‘Implement all infrastructure related recommendations in the Victorian Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 and its related Action Plans’.

## Conclusion

Road safety costs Victorians hundreds of lives, thousands of serious injuries and billions of dollars every year. Infrastructure is known to be critical to improving the safety of the road transport system, and yet road safety is largely invisible in Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy.

ACRS recommends:

- Comprehensive value assessments of infrastructure, including safety;
- Re-distribution of funds to support neighbourhood improvement projects including safety;
- Infrastructure which decreases rather than increases car-dependence;
- Inclusion of safety in comprehensive integration of land use planning and transport planning;
- The Strategy Includes a recommendation to implement the Victorian Road Safety Strategy and Action Plans.

ACRS appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Victorian Infrastructure Strategy and contribute to improved road safety. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.



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