

MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

22 March 2021

Office of Road Safety
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Via email only roadsafetystrategy@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021 to 2030

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to Australia's Draft National Road Safety Strategy 2021 to 2030 (the strategy).

The MAV is the peak representative and advocacy body for Victoria's 79 councils. The MAV was formed in 1879, with the Municipal Association Act 1907 appointing the MAV the official voice of local government in Victoria.

Today, the MAV is a driving and influential force behind a strong and strategically positioned local government sector. Our role is to represent and advocate the interests of local government; raise the sector's profile and ensure its long-term security; facilitate effective networks; support councillors; and provide policy and strategic advice, capacity building programs and insurance services to local government.

The MAV strongly supports the intent of the strategy to foster a strong road safety culture across Australian society. Of particular importance to the MAV is the need to better enable local government to deliver improved road safety outcomes through capability building and increased funding. It is also important to better protect vulnerable road users given they represent more than a third of deaths across the road network.

Further commentary is provided below.

Upskilling local government

Victorian councils are responsible for 87 per cent of the state's entire road network, with an important role in managing and maintaining safe, quality local networks, as well as establishing appropriate localised speed limits in conjunction with the Victorian Government.

The importance of well-supported councils to deliver on these responsibilities, which includes proper funding to deliver road safety programs, cannot be underestimated. National funding programs that specifically target safety, such as the blackspot program, road safety and infrastructure grants and other national road funding streams are all critical in this regard. Such funding is of even greater importance in Victoria where councils have been operating under



rate caps since 1 July 2016, compromising their ability to deliver safer roads due to a limited ability to raise revenue.

The MAV believes the strategy's current approach to local government is too narrow. The strategy should include a recommendation to increase council autonomy to manage the nuances of local roads in accordance with State legislation and/or regulation, and nationally consistent guidelines wherever possible. There is also a requirement for increased funding streams to support delivery of local improvements.

Increased funding will be the most successful enabler for local government to deliver improved road safety outcomes, not a change in reporting requirements as proposed. The focus on reporting requirements should be a minor component, with more detail included on how local government will be supported by the Australian Government to deliver improved outcomes.

Vulnerable road users

The MAV has been working in partnership with a range of organisations to improve conditions for vulnerable road users as described in the [joint consensus statement](#).

In line with this, the MAV recommends the strategy is updated to include a greater focus on vulnerable (older people and children) and unprotected (cyclists, pedestrians, and motorcyclists) road users given they represent more than one third of deaths across the road network. In the draft strategy, vulnerable roads users are the second last of nine priority areas despite a 45 per cent increase in cyclist deaths and 36 per cent increase in serious cyclist injuries.

The actions identified are largely focussed on the vulnerable users themselves. There is an opportunity to better educate car and truck drivers on how to support the safety of these road users, on and around roads. This is supported by recent Victoria Walks research conducted by the Monash University Accident Research Centre, which found the driver was offending in almost half of all crashes.

Furthermore, geographic-based data on page 5 is presented as deaths per 100,000 and highlights that regional and remote areas are currently over-represented. This leads on to specific recommendations prioritising regional, remote and indigenous targets. It is similarly important to understand and represent the actual numbers of deaths and serious injury to vulnerable road users, and to prioritise and fund actions to address this as part of the strategy.

Speed management

The MAV notes speed management is identified as a significant factor in the strategy (page 2) but does not have a stand-alone recommendation assigned. In Victoria, the State Government sets speed limits and speed zones within statutory guidelines. Where a speed limit change on a local road has been considered by a council to be necessary, the council must seek authorisation from VicRoads (Department of Transport) to make that change.

Although speed management is primarily the responsibility of state and local government, it should have a stand-alone set of actions that deal with community understanding, behavior change, and appropriate speed limit management. This is because of its significant relevance to multiple suggested areas of focus across the strategy.

Long term directions

The MAV proposes an enhanced approach that goes beyond simply measuring transformation of the transport system, and instead monitors transformation of the system against the desired vision and adjusts actions accordingly.

In relation to the specific role of local government listed on page 3, the MAV suggests adding the term 'deliver' so that the direction reads '*Local Government is supported to embed and deliver road safety in business as usual*'.

The MAV also notes funding constraints are much greater in the local government context when compared to other tiers of government, so increased funding is needed to achieve this long-term direction.

Movement and place

The MAV strongly supports a movement and place planning approach to meet the needs of all communities.

Safe System approach

The MAV strongly supports a Safe System approach, however, we propose the strategy explains this concept in greater detail as it appears that knowledge is assumed.

Social model

The MAV supports the social model approach. We also propose the consideration and use of other more readily understood terms such as 'collaborative', 'coordinated', 'systemic' or 'integrated'. If social model is to be used, a definition needs to be included in the strategy itself as it is not self-evident.

Reduction in age of vehicle fleet and better utilisation of new technology

The MAV supports this area of focus. We also note there is no practical action proposed. The statement on page 21 concludes by noting '*we did not see any reductions in the age of the vehicle fleets under the previous strategy. This is an area where research and development is needed to underpin policy development.*' If this is indeed a priority area and there has been a lack of success to date, other approaches may need to be considered.

The MAV also advocates for the need to ensure new vehicle design standards require that manufacturers and importers use the most up-to-date technology in their vehicles to ensure vulnerable road users are as protected as they can be.

Ongoing consultation with councils

Please note that while this submission aims to broadly reflect the views of local government in Victoria, it does not purport to reflect the exact views of individual councils. Furthermore, individual councils may choose to make separate submissions in response to the draft strategy.

The MAV remains committed to continuing to liaise with the Office of Road Safety and other key stakeholders about council issues and concerns in relation to this critical policy area.

Should you have any queries about this submission, please contact Emma Lake, Manager Infrastructure and Community Strengthening via email (elake@mav.asn.au).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Thompson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kerry Thompson
Chief Executive Officer