

TO: ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning, Environment and Territory and Municipal Service

## **Vulnerable road users**

We thank the Committee for providing us with an opportunity to make the following representations on behalf of vulnerable road users.

### ***Main points***

1. Few Canberrans can walk or cycle from home to a shop, school or workplace without travelling across or along a road.
2. “Vulnerable road users” includes people who travel on foot, by motorised or non-motorised bicycle, wheelchair or tricycle, by motorcycle, in baby carriages, and in trailers attached to bicycles.
3. Some vulnerable road users are completely reliant on Canberra's walking network for access to school, shops, public transport and other services, because they do not have the option of driving. Fifteen per cent of Canberrans do not have drivers' licences.
4. Canberra's main groups of vulnerable road users are:
  - 320,000 drivers who become pedestrians as soon as they step out of their cars.
  - 26,050 adults whose journeys to work include walking to bus stops (11,303), walking all the way (8,271) cycling (4,662) or by motorcycle/ scooter (1,814)<sup>i</sup>.
  - 25,600 children whose journeys to school include walking all the way (8,500), to bus stops (12,500), cycling (4,000) or skateboard/scooter/rollerblade (600)<sup>ii</sup>.
  - People who each day make 29,403 walking trips and 8,335 cycling trips into or out of Town Centres<sup>iii</sup>, and walk and cycle to and from other destinations.

### ***Recommendations***

1. Ensure that every suburban home has safe and direct walking access to public transport, local schools and local shops.
2. Enforce Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users.
3. Educate all Canberrans, especially drivers, about Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users.
4. Update the Road Rules to better address the needs of vulnerable road users.
5. Review the Road Rules to make them simpler and more consistent. This will make Road Rules Education easier.
6. Include “mobility and access” as objectives of Road Safety Strategy and Action Plans.
7. Establish a Vulnerable Road Users Secretariat, inter-departmental committee and Advisory Group to help Government agencies to understand and address issues that affect vulnerable road users.
8. Redesign intersections, especially those on dual carriageways.

## **(a) best practice approaches to protecting and encouraging vulnerable road users**

The Australian Government's July 2013 Ministerial Statement on [Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport](#) recommended, inter alia, to:

- *Include walking and riding when planning for land use and transport*
- *Ensure that infrastructure projects reflect consideration of all transport modes, and protect routes for walking, riding and accessing public transport*
- *support communities, businesses and local governments to plan for active travel in their local areas*
- *Consider establishing a new Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport council.*

The **Global Road Safety Partnership** has a [web page on vulnerable Road Users](#)<sup>iv</sup>.

In 2010 the NSW Government held an [Inquiry into Vulnerable Road Users](#)<sup>v</sup>.

The **World Health Organisation** in 2011 launched the [Decade of Action for Road Safety](#) 2011–2020 to draw attention to the needs of pedestrians<sup>vi</sup>.

[Tackling transport poverty](#) (UK): The Sustrans submission to the Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into Transport and the Accessibility of Public Services included the following recommendations:

- Practical measures including: ... making walking and cycling safer by developing high quality walking and cycling networks and instating 20mph as the default national speed limit.<sup>vii</sup>
- **reviewing accessibility planning.**<sup>viii</sup>

The Sustrans (UK), 2012, [Transforming young people's travel](#), submission to the Youth Select Committee enquiry on safe, affordable and accessible transport for young people includes the following recommendations:

- a definition of safe routes should be young-person centred and based on user attitudes and behaviour (i.e. are young people actually using it?) rather than technical standards of highway design (e.g. path widths).<sup>ix</sup>
- key facilities should be in locations that are accessible to young people independently by walking, cycling and public transport.<sup>x</sup>
- the public transport network should meet the four tests set out recently by PTEG (PTEG 2010 [Transport and Social Inclusion](#)) in order to address social exclusion, and should be available, accessible affordable and acceptable for all.<sup>xi</sup>

[Austin \(USA\)](#) has a Vulnerable Road Users Ordinance which requires motor vehicles to allow three feet of space when passing a bicyclist and other vulnerable road users. Large trucks and buses are required to provide at least six feet of space. If a motorist has to cross over double yellow lines to give the allotted space, the Police Department APD has included guidelines not to cite them.<sup>xii</sup>

Vulnerable Road Users were recently featured in 'Traffic Technology International' magazine: <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/b1aca1bc#/b1aca1bc/24>

**(b) gathering evidence from the community and experts about issues faced by vulnerable road users and potential improvements;**

The ACT Government's 2010 *Road Safety Community Survey* found that two-thirds of Canberrans believe that road safety for pedestrians and motorcyclists should be a high priority, and more than half believe that road safety for cyclists should be a high priority.

To pro-actively gather evidence about issues faced by vulnerable road users, the Government could establish:

- (1) a Vulnerable Road Users Committee and Secretariat; and
- (2) a Vulnerable Road Users Advisory Group.

**Vulnerable Road Users Committee and Secretariat**

The Secretariat Could service both an inter-departmental committee and the the Vulnerable Road Users Advisory Group.

This proposal is both similar and complementary to the recommendation, in the Australian Government's **July 2013 Ministerial Statement on [Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport](#)**, to consider establishing a new *Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport* council.

**Vulnerable Road Users Advisory Group.**

A Vulnerable Road Users Advisory Group could operate in similar way to the existing Road Users Working Group and Bicycle Advisory Group.

It would comprise representatives of relevant government agencies, together with community members representing vulnerable road users including pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists, children and people with disabilities.

It may be feasible to achieve some or all of this objective by expanding the scope of existing consultative groups.

**(c) recommending changes to be made in the ACT to better protect and encourage vulnerable road users**

Ensure that every suburban home has safe and direct walking access to public transport, local schools and local shops

- Ensure that every new suburb is large enough to sustain a population of children that will remain sufficient over the long term to sustain a viable primary school within the suburb, so that children can get to school without having to cross urban arterial roads.
- Ensure that every new suburb is large enough to sustain a population that will remain sufficient, over the long term, to sustain a viable shopping centre within the suburb.
- Ensure that every home in every new suburb is within reasonable walking distance (i.e. up to about 1 km) of the suburb's primary school and shopping centre.
- Ensure that every street in every suburb either has a footpath, or is a Shared Zone or *Woonerf* that is safe for children and adults to walk and cycle.

- Even an unobstructed nature strip may represent a greater trip hazard than a footpath.

More Australians die from falls than die on the roads.

- In wet weather, a nature strip represents a greater risk of wet feet, which can be uncomfortable and/or a health risk.

- Riding a bicycle on the soft or uneven surface of a nature strip requires more time and effort than riding on the firm surface of a footpath.

- It can be impractical to ride a mobility scooter on the soft and/or uneven surface of a nature strip.

- On streets without footpaths, ensure that nature strips are kept free of obstructions caused by landscaping or by parked cars, by authorising and encouraging police,



parking inspectors and other government employees and contractors to issue notices that explain to residents that by obstructing their nature strips they are forcing their neighbours and their neighbours' children to walk on the road.

- Some streets have roadways that are sufficiently wide to accommodate paths such as the path along Bulahdelah's main street, depicted in the photo at left.

## Enforce Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users

The current ACT Policing Service Agreement sets standards for observance of the Road Rules.

The standard relating to observing the speed limit directly affects motorcycle riders.

No current standard directly affects other vulnerable road users.

Partly because the Agreement lacks standards for Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users, ACT Police generally turn a blind eye to violations of Road Rules such as, for example:

- pedestrians crossing against red pedestrian signals
- drivers failing to give way to pedestrians, when turning at intersections
- cyclists riding across pedestrian crossings.

It can be argued that Police have more important things to do than to enforce Road Rules that are not important enough for Police to enforce.

That argument raises the question of whether a Road Rule is worth having if it is not worth enforcing. We address that issue under "Make the Road Rules simpler and more consistent."

## Educate all Canberrans, especially drivers, about Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users

Because drivers are not sufficiently skilled to safely share roads with children, authorities such as [KidSafe](#) recommend that “*children under 10 years of age need to be supervised at all times near traffic.*”

Most new drivers understand the Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users, but a 2010 [Canberra Pedestrian Forum Survey](#)<sup>xiii</sup> found that only two in five Canberrans know the rules for giving way to pedestrians at intersections.

This is as much an issue of access and mobility as it is of safety. It affects whether a person can access schools, shops and services safely and without undue delay.

Actions to improve this level of knowledge include:

- an education campaign aimed at people who already have their drivers' licences.
- making the renewal of a driver's licence conditional on successful completion of a short Road Rules knowledge test of about five questions.
  - People who fail the short test can be given the opportunity to study the Road Rules before sitting a more comprehensive Road Rules test.
  - This is comparable to the use of portable breathalysers to indicate whether or not a more authoritative alcohol test is warranted.
- Revising the ACT Road Rules Handbook to more accurately reflect the Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users, and to include more of those rules.
- Producing a complementary version of the ACT Road Rules Handbook that is written primarily at vulnerable road users, rather than written primarily for drivers.
- Educating primary school children about Road Rules that affect vulnerable road users, while at the same time educating them to:
  - (1) not assume that drivers know and/or obey the Road Rules, and
  - (2) observe their parents' driving, and to educate them when they breach the Rules.

## Update the Road Rules to better address the needs of vulnerable road users

ACT Road Rules 236 and 253 make it an offence for a pedestrian or a bicycle rider to cause a traffic hazard by moving into the path of a driver.

There is currently NO Road Rule that makes it an offence for a driver to cause a traffic hazard by moving into the path of a pedestrian, a bicycle rider or another driver.

Child cyclists, who are too young to ride on roads unaccompanied, are discriminated against by inconsistent Give Way rules that require them to give way, in circumstances where drivers, pedestrians and adult cyclists are not required to give way.

These are the Rules for Giving Way at intersections. Those Rules make it an offence for a driver to turn across the path of a pedestrian, an on-road cyclist or another driver, if the other person is travelling along the same street.

The current Rules do NOT require a turning driver to give way to a cyclist who is crossing the road into which the driver is turning, if the cyclist is crossing between footpaths. In such

cases, Rule 253 makes it an offence for the child to cause a traffic hazard by moving into the path of the driver.

A baby can be safely and legally carried in a car, but this is not the case for a baby being carried in a bicycle seat or in a bicycle trailer. A person carrying a baby under 12 months of age on a bicycle – even on a bicycle such as a Gazelle Cabby fitted with a Maxi-Cosi baby capsule – is legally required to risk permanently damaging the baby's spine by putting the baby in a helmet that not designed either for children aged under 12 months, or for use with a baby capsule that is not designed to accommodate a helmet. (As of a couple of years ago, no manufacturer produced a helmet suitable for babies under 21 months).

## Review the Road Rules to make them simpler and more consistent.

This will make Road Rules Education easier.

As has been mentioned above, the Give Way Rules for intersections are inconsistent in the way that they treat child cyclists in relation to other road users.

Road users who do not know the Road Rules are potential dangers, both to themselves and to other road users.

A 2010 [Canberra Pedestrian Forum Survey](#)<sup>xiv</sup> found that only four in ten Canberrans know the rules for giving way to pedestrians at intersections.

One cause of poor rates of understanding of the Road Rules is the sheer number of Road Rules. The ACT has more than 350 Road Rules.

One way to make the Road Rules simpler is to reduce their number and coverage.

Many Road Rules are of little value because they are poorly observed and poorly enforced. These include, for example:

- Rule 231: Crossing a road at pedestrian lights: *“If the pedestrian lights show a red pedestrian light and the pedestrian has not already started crossing the intersection or road, the pedestrian must not start to cross until the pedestrian lights change to green.”*
  - Most pedestrians will cross against a red signal if the approach road is clear of vehicles.
- Rule 248: No riding across a road on a crossing: *“The rider of a bicycle must not ride across a road, or part of a road, on a children’s crossing or pedestrian crossing.”*
  - Observations at the zebra crossing on Challis St show that less than one cyclist in ten observes this Rule.
- Rule 238: Pedestrians travelling along a road: *“A pedestrian travelling along a road ... must, when moving forward, face approaching traffic that is moving in the direction opposite to which the pedestrian is travelling, unless it is impracticable to do so.”*
  - If you park parallel on the left of a two-way street, and it is not impractical to walk to the footpath via the rear of your car, then Rule 238 makes it an offence to walk to the footpath via the front of your car.

## Include “mobility and access” in the objectives of Road Safety Strategies and Action Plans

The costs and benefits of road danger include not only deaths, injuries and property damage, but also travel time and, in some cases, the ability of people to access goods and services.

Rules that require cyclists on footpaths to give way to all other traffic at intersections impede mobility by increasing travel times.

Rules that are inconsistently observed – such as the Rules for giving way to pedestrians when turning at intersections – create uncertainty that not only increases danger, but also increase travel time both for drivers and pedestrians. The additional time and danger reduces the ability of some people to access goods and services, where accessing those goods or services requires walking across intersections.

## Redesign intersections, especially on dual carriageways

Minimal median widths and offset pedestrian crossings can reduce traffic delays and risky pedestrian behaviour and, by implication, reduce pedestrian deaths and injuries.

These design features have been implemented out successfully at the intersection of Melrose and Hindmarsh Drives, but have at more recent intersection upgrades.

Our review of the locations of twelve pedestrian deaths that has found that all but one occurred on dual carriageways, and that six of the seven deaths that occurred from 2006 to 2010 occurred on dual carriageways with medians wider than about five metres.

Our observations have shown that one factor that affects pedestrian risk-taking is unnecessary delays at pedestrian crossings. Crossing against a red pedestrian signal increases the risk of a collision eight-fold, as does crossing away from an intersection.

After pedestrian signal timing improvements at the intersection of Northbourne, Wakefield and Macarthur Avenues, rates of these risky crossings decreased by about half.

The combination of traffic signals and wide medians means that pedestrians are forced to wait for a second traffic light cycle because the lights change while they are crossing the median. This problem can be minimised by bringing the carriageways close together at intersections, leaving no more space than is necessary for a pedestrian refuge at the median.

A similar problem occurs where there is a narrow median but the pedestrian crossings to and from the median are in direct line with each other. In such situations traffic engineers are reluctant to permit a green signal on either crossing except when it is simultaneously safe to cross both crossings. They fear that a green signal on one carriageway could be misinterpreted as applying to the other carriageway. This means that pedestrians are prevented from crossing one or other of the carriageways at times when they can do so quite safely without encountering any conflicting vehicle traffic.

This problem has been resolved at the intersection of Melrose and Hindmarsh Drives, where pedestrian crossings are offset, pedestrian crossing timings have been optimised and pedestrian delays are now minimal. This reduces overall traffic delays, because reduced pedestrian traffic delays are achieved without affecting vehicle traffic delays.

Yours Faithfully

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- i ABS Census 2011 (Place of Enumeration).
- ii ABS Census at School 2011, converted from percentages to numbers using ABS population-by-age data for ages 5-17.
- iii GTA Consultants, 2012, Pedal Power Pedestrian & Cyclist Cordon Counts (weekday, 7-9am, noon-2pm and 4-6 pm)
- iv <http://www.grsproadsafety.org/our-knowledge/safer-road-users/vulnerable-road-users>
- v <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/BD0C30FA449977D9CA2577270021AA13>
- vi Source: WHO 2013, [Make Walking Safe: a brief overview of pedestrian safety around the world](#), WHO, Switzerland. (cited in State of Australian Cities 2013).
- vii Sustrans, 2012, [Tackling transport poverty](#), submission to Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into Transport and the Accessibility of Public Services
- viii Sustrans, 2012, [Tackling transport poverty](#), submission to Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into Transport and the Accessibility of Public Services
- ix Sustrans, 2012, [Transforming young people's travel](#), submission to Youth Select Committee enquiry on safe, affordable and accessible transport for young people
- x Sustrans, 2012, [Transforming young people's travel](#), submission to Youth Select Committee enquiry on safe, affordable and accessible transport for young people
- xi Sustrans, 2012, [Transforming young people's travel](#), submission to Youth Select Committee enquiry on safe, affordable and accessible transport for young people
- xii Source: Police Launch New Initiative To Protect Cyclists: [http://austinist.com/2013/05/03/post\\_24.php](http://austinist.com/2013/05/03/post_24.php) and <http://www.baltimorespokes.org/article.php?story=20130517125021954>
- xiii Canberra Pedestrian Forum media release, 2010, *Canberra fails Road Rules test*: [http://grapevine.net.au/~mccluskeyarundell/MR\\_Canberra\\_fails\\_Road\\_Rules\\_test.pdf](http://grapevine.net.au/~mccluskeyarundell/MR_Canberra_fails_Road_Rules_test.pdf)
- xiv Canberra Pedestrian Forum media release, 2010, *Canberra fails Road Rules test*: [http://grapevine.net.au/~mccluskeyarundell/MR\\_Canberra\\_fails\\_Road\\_Rules\\_test.pdf](http://grapevine.net.au/~mccluskeyarundell/MR_Canberra_fails_Road_Rules_test.pdf)