

MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

20 August 2021

Joint Select Committee on Road Safety
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via online submission only

Dear Sir/Madam

Joint Select Committee on Road Safety – Inquiry into Road Safety

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Joint Select Committee's Inquiry into Road Safety (the Inquiry).

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 work of the Committee as it considers and reports on measures that can be taken to reduce trauma and deaths on Australian roads. There are significant opportunities to improve road safety programs and relevant policy, embed road trauma prevention and reduce road trauma, particularly at the municipal tier.

Of particular importance to the MAV is the need to better enable local government to deliver improved road safety outcomes through capability and capacity building. 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 in response to the specific Terms of Reference of the Inquiry is provided in Attachment 1.



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 Inquiry.

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

Yours sincerely

Kerry Thompson
Chief Executive Officer
Municipal Association of Victoria

Attachment 1 – MAV Submission in response to the specific Terms of Reference of the Inquiry into Road Safety

Measures to support the Australian Parliament's ongoing resolve to eliminate road crash fatal and serious injuries with a focus on ways to achieving Vision Zero by 2050

Enhance the capacity of local government

Victorian councils are responsible for 87 per cent of the state's road network. Councils play 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 such as the blackspot program, road safety and infrastructure grants and other national road funding streams are all critical in this regard.

A commitment to enhancing these capacity-building programs is crucial, and 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 effectiveness of existing road safety programs across Australia; opportunities to improve them and encourage broader take-up of effective approaches

Encourage local road safety decision-making and program delivery

The MAV believes good road safety outcomes are more likely to be achieved when councils, as road managers and crucial road safety partners, have more autonomy to deliver better local outcomes. Local government is the tier of government closest to communities. It is arguably more agile and responsive to local needs and is able to test and trial innovative road safety initiatives quickly.

The Committee should pay particular attention to measures that empower councils to support improved road safety and manage the nuances of local streets and roads. Fewer time-limited grants, and an increase in ongoing core local roads funding streams will be more sustainable and the most successful enabler for local government to deliver improved outcomes.

The MAV notes speed management is identified as a significant factor in delivery of improved outcomes in both the State and Commonwealth Road Safety Strategies. 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, traditionally the council must seek authorisation from VicRoads (Department of Transport) to make that change. The MAV notes recent progress made through the Department to streamline approvals and encourages a further broadening and rollout of this approach. The Committee should take into consideration the excellent community outcomes associated with this more efficient approach.

Councils need to be better supported to make independent, local decisions on speed limits in the best interests of their communities, without unnecessary external authorisations.

Opportunities for government policy in health, education, industry, transport and other areas to contribute to road trauma elimination, integrating Safe System principles

The MAV supports a holistic approach to road safety. The integration of safe system principles into relevant policy and program development is a key feature of this approach

Support active transport

Everyone should be able to safely walk and ride whether for leisure, completing errands or

commuting. Many people don't yet have access to adequate footpaths and bike lanes that make walking and riding easy, safe and enjoyable. Local government should be empowered through sustainable funding to deliver safer walking and bike riding infrastructure.

Benefits of updated policy settings and investment in locally implemented infrastructure improvements would result in:

- construction job creation - stronger employment outcomes than road or rail construction
- support for local economic development, including local shopping and regional tourism
- dispersed benefits across both metropolitan and regional areas – low cost and local
- reduced overcrowding on public transport in urban areas
- reduced car congestion on roads
- significant physical and mental health benefits
- strong community support - VicHealth research indicates 67 per cent support for increased walking funding

Protect vulnerable road users

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

The MAV recommends the Committee pays careful attention to the needs of vulnerable (older people and children) and unprotected (cyclists, pedestrians, and motorcyclists) road users. They account for more than one third of deaths across the road network according to the Commonwealth's Office of Road Safety.

Implement a movement and place approach

The MAV strongly urges the Committee to consider the important role of the movement and place planning approach to meet the needs of all communities when it comes to the transport network. This approach recognises that the network performs two functions, (1) movement of people and goods and (2) often serving as a place, or destination in and of itself.

Considering movement, place, safety and environmental outcomes in holistic manner is crucial when making decisions to better support road safety.

Implement a Safe System approach and encourage emerging technologies

The MAV is aware of many Victorian councils applying a Safe System approach in their transport network engineering responses to road safety concerns. We encourage the Inquiry to consider highlighting case studies and the benefits of this approach.

The Committee should also consider the role that emerging technologies can play in improved road safety outcomes. There is an urgent need to ensure new vehicle design standards require that manufacturers and importers use the most up-to-date technology in their vehicles to ensure all road users are as protected as they can be.

Deliver education to drivers and school-aged children

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.

There are also opportunities for councils to be funded to work with and educate local school communities to build healthy and safe travel patterns from an early age.

Opportunities to embed road trauma prevention across Australian Government portfolios and agencies

Ensure a safer government vehicle fleet

The MAV would highlight the opportunity to influence the safety of the Commonwealth Government's own vehicle fleet, and ultimately safety in the second-hand vehicle market once sold. Vehicles purchased should incorporate the most up-to-date safety technologies and ratings.

Opportunities to reduce road trauma in the workplace, working with Work Health and Safety agencies and employers across Australia; including a focus on heavy vehicles and the gig economy

Reducing heavy vehicles on local streets

While this line of inquiry is more relevant to other sectors, road trauma affects everyone. Policy enhancements and infrastructure improvements that remove heavy vehicles from local streets, minimising the risk to both drivers and local communities. Funding that delivers a safer and more efficient freight network will benefit both the economy and road safety.